





A Happy New Year  
to  
Alicia  
from her Mother

1901















PORTRAITS AND SILHOUETTES  
OF  
MUSICIANS







PALESTRINA.



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1898

PORTRAITS

AND

SILHOUETTES OF MUSICIANS

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF CAMILLE BELLAIGUE

BY

ELLEN ORR



NEW YORK

DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY

1898

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University Press:  
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

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PALESTRINA.

TO THE REV. FATHER DOM MOCQUEREAU OF THE  
BENEDICTINES OF SOLESMES.

Complete works of Palestrina; Breitkopf and Haertel, Leipzig. — "Anthologie des maîtres religieux primitifs," published by M. Charles Bordes, director of the "Association des chanteurs de Saint-Gervais." — "Memorie storico-critiche della vita e delle opere di Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina," compiled by Giuseppe Baini, Rome, 1828. — "Kirchenmusikalisches Jahrbuch," edited by Dr. Fr. X. Haberl; Friedrich Pustet, Regensburg; *passim*.



## PALESTRINA.

Puissant Palestrina ! Vieux maître, vieux génie,  
Je vous salue ici, père de l'harmonie ;  
Car ainsi qu'un grand fleuve où boivent les humains,  
Toute cette musique a coulé de vos mains.

VICTOR HUGO.

### I.

IN 1524, according to the already antiquated testimony of Abbé Baini, or in 1526, after Dr. Haberl's more recent researches, Clement VII. being pope, and Charles V. emperor, there was born at Palestrina, near the foot of the Sabine hills, the child who was one day to take the name of his native town as his own, and thereby make it famous. He was baptised Giovanni Pierluigi, his parents, Santi Pierluigi and Maria Ghismondi, being plain country people in possession of a small property, — a little house surrounded by chestnut-trees and perched on the steep slopes from which the borough, then called Praeneste, still looks toward the Roman horizon.

From his earliest years Giovanni, or Gianetto, as he was familiarly called, loved and studied

music. In after days the dedication of one of his works to Pope Gregory XIII. read : *Cui quidem scientiæ totum me a puero dedi.* Little is known of his childhood. We may only surmise that from time to time the young mountaineer would go down to Rome ; especially to be present at the church festivals. To-day the country people still do so, — the *contadini* of Tivoli, Frascati, and Albano. One morning, so runs the story, as the child, *cantando secondo l'uso dei giovanetti*, was crossing the piazza of Santa Maria Maggiore, the master of the chapel heard his singing and at once took the boy into his *scuola*. At the time the Gallo-Belgian school of musicians reigned supreme in Rome, and indeed throughout Italy. All the great chapels were directed by the Flemish. "It is they," writes Guichardin, "who have restored and perfected music. It comes to them so naturally that, men and women, they sing as though by instinct, *con grandissima grazia e melodie.*" One of the most famous of these Northern artists, Claude Goudimel of France, had a school in Rome, and Palestrina seems to have been his pupil during the four years from 1540 to 1544.

On October 28, 1544, by contract signed with the cathedral-chapter of Palestrina, "Gio-

vanni, musicien, fils de Santi Pierluigi" obtained the revenue of a canonry, but upon the following conditions: that he should play the organ on feast days, take part in the daily singing of the mass, vespers, and complines, and that he should instruct the canons and children in music. He did not, however, exercise these modest functions for long. It may be that he grew independent of the "revenue," for he had married a young girl of the town, Lucrezia de Goris, who shortly afterwards inherited from her mother a few acres of vineyard and meadow; and in 1551, Giovanni del Monte, the bishop cardinal of Palestrina, becoming pope under the title of Julius III., called his young fellow citizen to Rome, conferring upon him the directorship of the chapel of St. Peter<sup>1</sup>. Here Palestrina's artistic career really began. Three years later, in 1554, he dedicated to Julius III. his first volume of masses; the first work of sacred music that had yet been offered by an Italian to a sovereign pontiff.

The pope, sensible of this homage, and still more sensible of Palestrina's dawning renown,

<sup>1</sup> The Chapel of St. Peter (in the Vatican) must not be confounded with the papal chapel, — the private chapel of the sovereign pontiffs.

resolved to attach the musician more securely to himself. Withdrawing him from the directorship of St. Peter's, he appointed him to the position of singer in his own chapel, giving the directorship of St. Peter's to a Florentine, Animuccia, a former fellow-disciple of Palestrina's in Goudimel's school. This appointment to the pontifical chapel, however, was not without its difficulties, as it infringed upon certain rules established by the pope himself concerning the recruiting of the singers. Palestrina's future colleagues bestirred themselves and protested at the encroachment, but the pope held his ground and annulled the rules in question, so that on January 13, 1555, Palestrina, in spite of the papal choir, and perhaps a little in spite of himself, — for he loved his Vatican basilica, — was admitted into the corporation of the pontifical singers.

He remained there, however, only six months. Julius III. died and was replaced by Marcellus II., who, in his turn, died after a brief reign of three weeks, to be succeeded by Paul IV., the reformer, — Paul IV., the terrible. During the first days of his succession, in the beginning of July, 1555, the new pontiff called before him deputies from the Apostolic College of singers, and demanded of them if all was carried on in

their chapel according to the rules for the charges and offices of the Roman court, which had been fixed by the fifth œcumenical council of the Lateran.<sup>1</sup> When the deputies replied in the affirmative, the pope reminded them of a certain decree of Leo X. enjoining upon the singers, under the most severe penalties, "to live modestly and according to the scrupulous morality which becomes good priests." Had he not learned, however, that several of them not only were not priests, but were not even presbyters? The deputies acknowledged that in fact three among their number were married: Leonardo Bari, Domenico Ferrabosco, and Giovanni Pierluigi, but that these three had, none the less, been expressly nominated by preceding pontiffs. To which Paul IV. replied that his predecessors had done as they chose, and that he, for his part, should do as he chose; he denounced the slackness of discipline, and insisted upon the necessity for its restoration. In vain did the deputies respectfully urge the rights of the apostolic singers, not to mention the indignity which would be put upon them and the recognised perpetuity of their positions. The pope dismissed his visitors with his benediction and the assurance that he

<sup>1</sup> Bains.

would regulate everything for the greatest good of all; and on July 30, a rigorous pontifical brief, accusing Palestrina and his two colleagues of being married men, deprived the three of their charge, giving them, by way of compensation, or of consolation, a pension of six gold scudi a month.

This blow was keenly felt by Palestrina. "All cares," he says, in one of his dedications, "are the enemies of the Muses, but above all, those which domestic necessities bring upon us." Such cares pressed upon him at that time, but fortunately, on October 1, 1555, two months only after his exclusion from the papal chapel, he was elected chapel-master of St. John Lateran. He remained there for six melancholy and laborious years, writing his first works, among others the "*Improperia*," and buying now and then a few feet of vineyard on the slopes of his native hills; but ever did his thoughts turn to St. Peter's, his beloved basilica from which he had been expelled. Still young, he had already proved the caprices of fortune, and on those rare days of liberty when, leaving Rome as the sun rose, he would arrive towards the sun-setting before his own modest domain, many a time must he have repeated those words of the prophet, which he has so eloquently

sung: "Oh, my chosen Vineyard, how art thou turned unto me into bitterness."

However, he worked incessantly, many of his madrigals dating from this time. In 1561 he left the poorly paid directorship of St. John Lateran for that of Santa Maria Maggiore. Two years later, after a session of eighteen years, the Council of Trent dissolved, and on August 2, 1564, Pius IV., who had succeeded Paul IV. on the pontifical throne, nominated a committee of eight cardinals, among whom were Vitellozzo and Charles Borromeo, to oversee the execution of the Council's decrees.

We come now to the most important period in Palestrina's life, but a fog of legend has long obscured its principal events, — a fog which to-day German erudition seems to be dissipating. What were the details of the Council's decrees relating to sacred music? What were the prerogatives and functions of the committee of cardinals, and what were the circumstances connected with the composition of the Marcel-line mass? There is no subject upon which the world has been longer and more diversely deceived than the subject of the reform of religious music in the sixteenth century, its origin, its promoters or patrons, its accomplishments, and finally the part taken in it by the author of

the famous "Mass of Pope Marcellus." The abundant and often most veracious *mémoires* of Abbé Baini have, until recently, been considered an authority. But, for perhaps twenty years past, this unqualified reliance upon them has been shaken. New light came from Germany through the school and review of sacred music, both of which are under the direction of the scholar Dr. Haberl, chapel-master of the cathedral of Ratisbon, and editor of *Palestrina*. Baini had, in old days, the merit of having rectified more than one error concerning the points which just now arrest our attention, but Dr. Haberl comes with authentic documents sometimes to confirm, sometimes to confute, Baini's dicta. Perhaps it will not be without interest to review the question, first in the light of Baini's memoirs, and then with the assistance of M. Haberl's more authenticated researches.

Of the many reproaches commonly passed upon sacred music prior to Palestrina, Abbé Baini rejects some and justifies others. He has demonstrated, in the first place, that music dating from before Palestrina's time did not sin either by the abuse of ornament and *floritures* or by the confusion of the voices with the instruments. Musical ornamentation is posterior to Pales-



trina's epoch, — the trill, notably, dating no earlier than the end of the sixteenth century, and the instrumental accompaniment of the voices in church music, not before the middle of the same century. Thus it was by other, by two other, vices that sacred music was corrupted and menaced with destruction. Of these two vices, one was the complication of technicalities, pushed to such an extreme that in the chaos of imitations, canons, and artifices of all kinds, the words sung were inaudible. The other corruption was the introduction into sacred music of elements which were profane, at times impure. The examples of these abuses and scandals are numerous and well known. The scholasticism of the Middle Ages had put to the torture all musical thought, and, as a result, the latter was now setting itself to the reproducing of all manner of puerile fantasies and unnatural inversions, by means of the most improper figures, — as, for instance, the canon of the cross and that of the crab. As for the text, suffocated under a mass of notes and imprisoned in this barbarous gangue, it had long since ceased to signify in the least. The different voices habitually sang different words ; thus, in a mass of Hobrecht's, while one of the parts sang the “ Incarnatus ” the others accompanied

with "O clavis David et sceptrum domûs Israel." The Middle Ages, not content with thus complicating the music of the Church, had actually profaned it. Masses originally written from the "plain-songs" from which they took their name, such for instance as the masses of "Ave Maria," "Viri Galilæi," and "Ecce Sacerdos Magnus," were now composed upon popular themes, which were anything but canonical, and which, indeed, were most unseemly. In Italy we find "Mio marito mi ha infamato," or "Baciate mi, o cara;" in France, "A l'ombre d'un buyssonet," or the famous song of "L'Homme armé," of which even Palestrina himself made use. In one of Hobrecht's masses the tenor at the "Kyrie" sang, "Je ne vis oncques la pareille;" at the "Sanctus," "Gracieuse gente meunyère;" at the "Benedictus," "Madame, faites-moi savoir." At times they went so far as to parody the sacred text, and in order to recall to Louis XII. a promise which he had not kept, Josquin des Près composed, so it is said, and dedicated to the king a psalm upon these words: "Memor esto verbi tui servo tuo." (Remember thou the word given to thy servant.)

These, then, are the two vices of which it was necessary to purge religious music; such a confusion of the different parts as prevented the

hearing of the text by the congregation, and the use of profane themes.

As to the accomplishment of this double reform, we shall first seek for the romance of the story in Baini's memoirs ; later Dr. Haberl's " Annals " will furnish us with its history.

Pius IV., having at heart the execution of the decrees issued by the Council of Trent, just dissolved, named for that purpose, as we have already seen, a committee of eight cardinals. Pius was of the Medici family and a sumptuous pontiff, the friend of elegance and luxury. It was he who persuaded his cardinals to leave to women the use of carriages and to reinstate in honour the old custom of riding upon richly caparisoned horses, in brilliant equipage. He loved music, toward which, indeed, he had always a feeling of gratitude, as, in his earlier days, it had been a lute-player who had predicted his high destinies. Baini gives the following recital of the incident, a tale painted in true Renaissance colours. Cardinal Pisano, by way of fêting his anniversary, was in the habit of uniting his brethren of the Sacred College about his table and entertaining them with great magnificence. Now there was in Rome at that time a marvellous child, little Silvio Antoniano, who excelled in lute-playing and the

improvisation of songs. One day when Cardinal Pisano was giving one of his banquets, Silvio was brought in, toward the close of the festivities, that he might charm the illustrious guests, *col fanciullo cantore suonatore e poeta*. The cardinals fêted the boy, and one of them, Ranuccio Farnese, taking up a bouquet of flowers, gave it to him, with the direction to lay it down before that one of the *porporati* who should one day have the *tiarā* placed upon his head. After running his eyes over the assembly, the *innocente garzoncello* stepped towards the Cardinal Giovanni Angelo de' Medici, and let the perfumed promise fall upon the knees of the prelate. Then, taking in his hands the lute which hung from his neck, he sang, with an exquisite grace, the praises of the pontiff whom the flowers had chosen. When Pius IV., in 1564, instituted the committee of cardinals, he had doubtless not forgotten this event.

The cardinals hastened to delegate two of their number, Vitellozzo and Borromeo, to organise a musical reform.<sup>1</sup> The two prelates, in agreement with a certain number of pontifical singers, whom they had added to their committee, decided upon the proscription of profane melody and of words which were *capricciose*,

<sup>1</sup> Baini.

that is, not in the liturgy. As to the intelligibility of the text, it was strenuously insisted upon by the cardinals, but the singers saw in that a serious obstacle to the polyphonic system of vocal counterpoint and imitations. Their Eminences then cited the "Improperia" of Palestrina in support of their demands, but the singers would not admit that, in works of greater length, a like result could be obtained.

It was at last resolved upon to confide to Palestrina the composition of a mass, which should be subject to the required conditions. The work, in case of success, should reinstate religious music, for which, in future, it should be the model and pattern ; but in case of failure, it should decide the condemnation and banishment of Palestrina's beloved art, whose fate he now held in his own hand. Our Italian biographer tells us of the masses composed by the master, three in number for greater security against failure, and how, on April 28, 1565, all three were given before the committee, gathered for this purpose, in the palace of Cardinal Vitellozzo. The third was judged to be superior to the others, and admirably perfect at all points. The pontifical singers were charged to perform henceforth none but works

of this style, and the music of the Church was saved.

The prelates having rendered an account of their decision to Pius IV., the pontiff desired himself to hear the masterpiece which they praised so highly, and on Tuesday, June 19, 1565, Palestrina's mass was given, for the first time before the pope, in the Sistine Chapel, Cardinal Borromeo officiating with great solemnity. The pontiff, so say the memoirs of the time, thought it so beautiful that he cried, "These are the harmonies heard by the Apostle John in the heavenly Jerusalem, and which this later John has in his turn awakened in this our earthly Jerusalem !"

Legendary as is this version, it was long held to be an authentic account of this episode, which was, indeed, one of great importance, both in the life of Palestrina and in the musical history of the sixteenth century ; but Dr. Haberl has formally contradicted it, and, text in hand, has convinced the world of its inaccuracy.<sup>1</sup> He has proved, in the first place, that the committee — the famous committee of 1564 — was not in the least formed for the purpose of es-

<sup>1</sup> Cäcilien-Kalender und Fortsetzung desselben als "Kirchenmusikalisches Jahrbuch," edited by Dr. Fr. X. Haberl; xvii<sup>es</sup> Jahrgang, 1892.

pecially occupying itself with the musical reform which had been ordered by the Council of Trent. Moreover, that the Council, as its minutes attest, was but incidentally, and in the most general terms, occupied with the aforesaid reforms.<sup>1</sup> It appears that Baini based his story upon a certain pontifical brief or *motu proprio* of August 2, 1564, which nominated the committee of cardinals. Now this *motu proprio* which Doctor Haberl also cites word for word, contains not a syllable on the subject of music. It simply enjoins upon the cardinals to reform, according to the spirit of the Council of Trent, certain charges or offices of the Holy See, and amongst these offices is the *Camera Apostolica*, — to which the pontifical singers belonged.

The cardinals, Vitellozzo and Borromeo, who had in charge the examination of the *Camera*, did, indeed, take certain steps with regard to the singers, but these were exclusively disciplinary in their character, relating to questions of treatment, fines, and benefices, and utterly foreign to the subject of music. Not a trace

“Ab ecclesiis vero musicas eas, ubi sive organo, sive cantu lascivum aut impurum aliquid miscetur, item sæculares omnes actiones, vana atque adeo profana colloquia, deambulationes, strepitus, clamores arceant, ut domus Dei vere domus orationis videatur ac dici possit (22nd session, 17 September, 1562).”

is to be found of the committee ordering Palestrina to write a mass. The journal of the pontifical chapel does, indeed, report that on April 28, 1565, the singers, meeting at the house of Cardinal Vitellozzo, did there perform certain masses, *ad probandum si verba intelligerentur prout Reverendissimis placuit*; but nothing is said as to which works these were, nor whether Palestrina was even present at the trial; nor, in fact, whether the cardinals ever declared themselves as satisfied with the latter's composition; and lastly the same journal registers, on that nineteenth day of June, 1565, only the celebration of a mass in the Sistine Chapel before the pope, Cardinal Borromeo officiating. But it reports no solemn rendering, on that day, of a mass written by Palestrina.

But which, then, were the masses executed on that occasion before the cardinals? From certain documents, which, apparently, were unknown to Baini, Dr. Haberl concludes that they must have been a number of masses composed by different musicians; by Animuccia, for example, or Palestrina, it may be, but, at all events, masses complying as fully with the requirements of the Council as did the Marcelline mass to which has always been given, most unjustly, the whole honour of the reform. It is



possible that this grand work of Palestrina was given before the cardinals on that day, but it is certain that its performance was not ordered by them. Dr. Haberl supposes that it was composed at an earlier date, between 1551 and 1554, before the pontificate of that Marcellus II. whose name it was to bear. At all events, it was not published under this title until 1567, and it is to be found previously to this publication, and without any dedication, in the archives both of Santa Maria Maggiore and the Sistine Chapel. Why, then, did Palestrina dedicate his work thus in retrospect, as it were, to Pope Marcellus? Because the latter, when nothing more than the very artistic and lettered cardinal, Marcello Cervino, had often conversed with Palestrina, whose patron he was, upon the subject of those reforms long since become so necessary and demanded by religion. Risen to the pontifical throne, Marcellus would have accomplished them, had death but left him time, and Palestrina never forgot that his patron, at least, had desired them. Therefore if he himself, a dozen years later, dedicated one of his masses to Marcellus II., it was that he might render a faithful and grateful homage to noble intentions.

Are we, then, to conclude from all this later information that Palestrina had nothing to do

with the reform with which his name remains associated? By no means. This reform, whose two features or two principal virtues were simplicity and purity, was, in great part, the work of the master, but less of a personal work than has been thought; a work, too, not exclusively represented by the Marcelline mass; and, lastly, one less sudden and more slowly accomplished than any pontifical order or official command could have sufficed to realise.

However this may have been, Palestrina, in this same year of 1564, saw created for himself, by the pope, the office and title of Composer to the Pontifical Chapel, and, moreover, a settlement of nine gold scudi made upon him, in consideration of the various compositions which he had edited and of those which he should edit in the future, for the service of the afore-said chapel.<sup>1</sup> He did not abandon, on account of this appointment, the directorship of Santa Maria Maggiore, which he retained until 1571, when Animuccia, who had formerly taken his place at St. Peter's, having died, Palestrina re-entered his beloved basilica, never again to leave it. At the same time he was chosen by Filippo Neri, and again in Animuccia's place, as master of the chapel and titled composer to

<sup>1</sup> Haberl, Jahrbuch, 1894.

the Oratory. Filippo's love for music is well known, and what rank he would be likely to give it in the exercises of the order. It is written, in the rules of the Oratory, that it was the will of the saintly old man "that his fathers, joined to the faithful, should stimulate themselves to the contemplation of celestial things by the means of musical harmonies (*Musico concentu excitentur ad cœlestia contemplanda*)." Filippo felt the tenderest friendship for Animuccia and Palestrina. He was their spiritual director, and, with an interval of twenty-three years, he stood by the dying bedside of both his friends.

Animuccia possessed a soul all candour, full of poetry and faith. It is said that his wife and himself gave to Rome an example which had been set to men in former days by St. Paulin de Nole and his wife, who lived together united only in spirit. "When they felt themselves to be disentangled from all the pleasures of this world," says an eminent biographer, "they lived joined in spirit, that most beautiful and most divine part of man, and contented themselves with the sweet and heavenly communion of affection and prayer."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vie de Saint Philippe de Neri, by his Eminence Cardinal Capecelatro, Archbishop of Capua, vol. ii.; translation by P. Bezin of the Oratory. Paris: Poussielgue.

Animuccia, a fellow disciple, as we have seen, of Palestrina's, in the school of Goudimel, himself also influenced the Palestrinian reform ; so much, at least, may be inferred from the preface to his masses, in which he writes : " Among the sacred songs which are sung to-day in the Divine Mysteries, are many composed with rare artifice, which, by their suavity give to their hearers a marvellous pleasure. There are always, however, some who desire, with reason, that words intended to excite piety towards God should be heard and understood with clearness. On the contrary, employed in a certain manner, as the words are, they seem not to be adorned by the song, but almost to be oppressed and covered by roulades ; and this is why, moved by the judgment of these persons, I have forced myself to adorn these prayers and praises to God with songs which do not prevent the hearers from understanding the text, but which, still, are not entirely denuded of art, and fail not to give pleasure to the ear." <sup>1</sup> Such was Animuccia, — a master in his art and held in such honour that Palestrina, the illustrious biographer goes on to say, " did not drive him from his nest."

From the time of his return to St. Peter's and his appointment in the Oratory until his death,

<sup>1</sup> Vie de Saint Philippe de Neri.

Palestrina's life offers little of especial interest, flowing calmly on as it did under the shadow of the immense basilica, through twenty-three years of work and piety. From time to time some great lord possessed of a love of music — a Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, a Prince Giacomo Buoncompagni, or a Cardinal Aldobrandini — would confide to the master the directing of the music in his private chapel, and the artist, in his turn, would express his thanks by dedicating to his patron some one of his masterpieces.

The popes succeeded one another, all admiring and protecting the great artist. These were beautiful years for him, — years of genius and of glory. In 1575, a solemn jubilee was granted to Christendom, and celebrated by Pope Gregory XIII. In the chronicles of the time one can read the story of the arrival in Rome of the inhabitants of Palestrina, coming on a pilgrimage to attend the jubilee; more than fifteen hundred strong, they descended from their mountain home. An immense black cross led them, reverently escorted by fifty couples of little children, dressed as angels, *a guisa d'angeli*, and holding in their hands olive branches. Then followed the brotherhoods, carrying enormous crucifixes, veiled in black and white; then monks, priests in their surplices, canons in

furred hoods, and lastly women, *non senza bell' ordine e con gran modestia*. Three choruses of musicians sang as they marched along, and their songs were Palestrina's.<sup>1</sup> In such pious equipage did the cortège cross the Roman campagna, the waves of music spreading slowly and solemnly through the chill atmosphere, while the great, grey cattle pushed their heads over the hedges that lined the way, and listened, wondering. As the pilgrims approached the city, so the chronicle reads, beneath the sacred ground which they trod, the dead, in the catacombs, awakened by the new psalmodies, responded from the depths of their tombs.

In 1580, Palestrina became a widower, and in 1581, when over fifty years of age, married again. Doubtless neither St. Paulin de Nole nor Annunziata would have approved of this course! Henceforth the chronology of his life, verified by Dr. Haberl,<sup>2</sup> marks little but the dates of his innumerable works, — masses, motets, lamentations, madrigals, hymns to the Virgin, or the Canticle of canticles, and from time to time, between two such notices, the mention of the

<sup>1</sup> See "Narrazioni delle opere piu memorabili fatte in Roma l'anno del Giubileo 1575, composte dal M. R. P. F. Angelo Pientini, delle compagnie di Palestrina;" quoted by Baini.

<sup>2</sup> Haberl, Jahrbuch, 1894.

purchase of some little vineyard, or an olive orchard.

At last on January 26, 1594, Palestrina, stricken with pleurisy, took to his bed, receiving the communion and extreme unction from Filippo Neri, who was constantly with him during his last days. On the morning of February 2, writes the biographer, Palestrina bethought himself, not without pleasure, of having, a little time before, set to music the Hymns of Mary. "This thought increased his fervour and his hope, and Filippo, perceiving his good inclinations and desiring further to excite them, said to his beloved 'son in the spirit' with that loving air of benediction which was always his, 'Wouldst thou go to-day to enjoy the feasts that the saints and angels in heaven are making in honour of the Queen?' Palestrina, who was very pious and had many times, by the sweet power of his music, honoured the gentle Mother of God, was much moved by this invitation. 'Yes, I ardently desire it; may Mary, my advocate, obtain it of her divine Son for me.' Scarcely had Palestrina, still fully conscious, breathed these words when, quite tranquilly and full of confidence in the mercy of the Lord, he peacefully gave up his soul to God and ascended, as one loves to hope, by the intercession

of the Virgin Mary and the prayers of his holy confessor Filippo, to that home where souls shall sing to all eternity."

## II.

Thus lived Palestrina. Exempt as it is from agitation, even from animation, destitute of dramatic or passionate incidents, calm within the peace of the basilicas, this life is simple, I had almost said mediocre, beside the pathetic fate of a Michael Angelo or the more than adventurous career of a Benvenuto Cellini; but Palestrina's career, simple as it seems, was surrounded by grave circumstances; insignificant in itself, it was contemporaneous with an eminently significant "moment" and "environment." It coincides with the movement of the spirit and genius of Italy which may be defined, briefly, as the reaction from the Renaissance. This reaction roused the solicitude and ceaseless efforts of all, or nearly all, the popes under whom Palestrina lived. In it was summed up their common work, and into this, their duty and mission resolved themselves. New contingencies and new perils imposed upon the Church new rules of conduct. The dreams of the Renaissance — dreams divine and ever to be



regretted — vanished before the terrible voice of Luther ; the German monk saw only the excesses, — but too visible, alas, — and the deviations from that principle of the Renaissance which may be called truly catholic, that is, universal, that noble hope and generous desire for peace and harmony. If the first cry of the Church, almost nineteen centuries ago, was for penitence and mortification, it was because that cry was sounding out through a world perishing in voluptuous corruption and the abuse of enjoyments. But when above a thousand grievous years had passed, when the long distress of the Middle Ages had weighed its full punishment upon the earth, which Dante, with a sigh, called the *terra lagrimosa*, — the earth which weeps, — God's vicars believed themselves authorized in giving a little abatement to human misery, and some few traces of beauty appeared, to brighten the eyes blinded by many tears.

The popes made themselves the interpreters and dispensers of a spirit of indulgence and joy, which seemed to have descended from heaven. They remembered, or allowed themselves to be reminded by Christian platonism, taught by such men as Sadoletto and Marsilius Ficimus, that Christ “ did not refuse his presence at joyous feasts. At Cana he changed the water

into wine ; and was it not at the table that he revealed to his disciples the mystery of the eucharist ? ”<sup>1</sup> Alas, the feast soon degenerated into an orgy, the miracle into a scandal, and popedom was the first to be intoxicated with the new wine which she had poured forth. The Reformation denounced, with justice, this alliance, or this alloying, of the spirit with the flesh, in which the latter was far in excess ; and the Church, rudely brought to her senses, had barely time to dissolve the marriage from which she had hoped to receive such glorious fruit. She repudiated the Renaissance, and, in order to save from wreck the ship of St. Peter, she sacrificed the treasures with which the vessel had been freighted. Popes who were guardians of the faith, succeeded popes who had been friends of the arts, and the smile faded from the face of Rome.

Poor Rome, in what mourning was she clothed, and with what ruin was she covered, when the child of Præneste saw her for the first time ! Men had assailed her double dowry ; they had outraged her beauty and her truth. Against the latter the Reformation had raised a cry which already half Europe seemed to be on the brink of obeying, and against her

<sup>1</sup> *Le Prince Vitale*, by M. Victor Cherbuliez.

Roman beauty the hordes of Charles V. and the Bourbons had raised their barbarous hands. "Churches, palaces, convents, even the most humble dwellings," writes an eloquent biographer of Michael Angelo, "were sacked. Manuscripts and precious pictures were soiled, torn and scattered. . . . The Bourbon soldiers had turned the Stanza of the Vatican into a guard-room, and had rested their halberds against the École d'Athènes. Not Huns nor Goths nor Vandals would have committed such horrors; Turks and Moors would have been less inhuman. And this, Rome endured for nine months . . . while famine and the plague came to complete the work of devastation. More than thirty thousand persons perished, and the population, from eighty-five thousand, was reduced to thirty-two thousand." <sup>1</sup> Like frightened swallows the artists had flown in all directions before this winter of barbarism. "We have passed through fire and water," said Sebastiano del Piombo, "and we have suffered unimaginable things." Then indeed was Rome the city wept by the prophet; the city over which, thirty years later, the writer of the "*Improperia*," mindful still of such sorrow, weeps in his turn.

Paul III., under whose pontificate Palestrina

<sup>1</sup> Michel-Ange, by M. Émile Ollivier.

studied with Goudimel, strove to raise faith above art. Truth to tell, he loved Michael Angelo, and was loved by the great artist in his turn. He confirmed the order for the Last Judgment, which had been given by his predecessor Clement VII. to the painter of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, and he hastened the completion of the terrible fresco upon the altar wall, a spot which, till then, had never been saddened by the picturing of eternal punishment; but, as M. Cherbuliez says, "Paul III. was the Janus of the popes; that Farnese had two faces, the one turned toward the past, the other toward the future."<sup>1</sup> And even while protecting Michael Angelo he was organising the Brotherhood of Jesus and the Inquisition. Under his reign even the public fêtes bore a character of rigorous orthodoxy, and on the carnival chariots of 1545 Popery was to be seen treading Heresy beneath her feet.

Julius III., Palestrina's first patron, stepped aside from the path marked out for the Church by his predecessor. He was, according to a writer of that period,<sup>2</sup> *un uomo inetto e tutto intento ai suoi riposi*. But Paul IV. took up once more the reactionary work, and the spirit of rigour breathed more ardently than ever over the

<sup>1</sup> Le Prince Vitale.

<sup>2</sup> Pietro Nore's.

city of God. "The Dominican Ghislieri (afterwards Pius V.) was appointed inquisitor-general to all Christendom. Any accidental relationship with the heretics was punished, — the first offence with a fine, the second with imprisonment, the third with exile or death. A contemporary maintains that, if all the books which were burned had been gathered into one pyre, there would have been a conflagration as great as that of Troy."<sup>1</sup> Paul IV. would have destroyed as indecent the fresco of the Last Judgment, but, upon the importunities of certain friends, he contented himself with having its nudities covered by Daniel de Volterre, who, thereby, gained for himself the title of *Braghettone*, — the breeches-maker. History bears witness to the ferocious and implacable nature of the old pontiff, whose soul seems to have been, as it were, consumed with wrath, *collerica e adusta*.<sup>2</sup> When Giovanni Pietro Carafa, the "Theatin cardinal," at the age of seventy-nine, placed the tiara on his head, the times had never been more difficult to cope with.<sup>3</sup> Both the creeds and the

<sup>1</sup> M. Émile Ollivier, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Navagero.

<sup>3</sup> We borrow the greater part of the following details from the remarkable work of M. George Duruy, "Le Cardinal Carlo Carafa (1519-1561). Étude sur le Pontificat de Paul IV." Paris: Hachette.

earthly possessions of the Church continued to be menaced. She was subjected to every anxiety, political and religious, while Italy was both the theatre and the stake of a perpetual battle. She was now not simply submitting to foreign masters, she was calling for them. And as to orthodoxy—the Council of Trent, the Order of Jesus, and the Inquisition, scarcely sufficed to defend it. The reform gained ground daily, and day by day some new portion of her flock forsook the shepherd. Half Germany belonged to Luther. Little by little Switzerland had given herself to Calvin, and suspicious symptoms began to make their appearance in France and the Low Countries; both the temporal power and the spiritual were the goal and the prey of the disease.

Paul IV. essayed to stem the tide of these two perils. From being a warlike and political pontiff he resolved to turn his thoughts solely toward religion. One sees suddenly reappearing in him the former inquisitor, the founder of the order of the Theatins, that austere priest whose zeal for the cause of religion began its career at the Council of Trent.<sup>1</sup> He repented of having coveted the kingdoms of this earth and henceforth sought only the advancement of the

<sup>1</sup> M. G. Duruy, *op. cit.*

kingdom of God and His justice. The latter was, indeed, at that time, infamously abused ; it was the scandals in his own family and the shameful excesses of his nephews which urged Paul IV. to his severity. To appreciate the disgraceful facts, one must read, in M. Duruy's book, the story of a certain banquet, at which a cardinal drew his sword in defence of a courtesan. A few days later the pope, before the congregation of the Holy Office, "condemned with vehemence the conduct of the cardinal."<sup>1</sup> Upon one of his fellow cardinals, Pacheco, venturing to defend the culprit, the pontiff grew pale with anger, and cried out again and again with all his strength, "Reform ! Reform !" till, as the Cardinal Pacheco murmured, "In that case, Holy Father, it is for us to give the example," the pope bowed his head and sank into silence. Read also the account of the consistory in which Paul IV. denounced before the Sacred College the disgrace of his worthless nephew. Listen, and picture to yourself that harangue, — the imprecations of the enraged old man, accusing and cursing, amidst his tears and sobs, — and you will comprehend what a pope was he who drove Palestrina from the Sistine Chapel because he was a married man.

<sup>1</sup> M. G. Duruy, *op. cit.*

Less terrible, but scarcely less severe, were the successors of Paul IV.: Pius V., who caused the removal of the statues from the Vatican, and Gregory XIII., under whose reign, as we read in the "*Prince Vitale*," poor Tasso, that tardy child of the Renaissance, suffered so cruelly. Indeed, well may we say, changing but one word of Musset's line, —

"Then came the *unhappy* days of Art."

In those days many paintings were exiled from the churches, — paintings for which men of the day, and above all, many women, had served as models. The greater part of the treatises on painting, published during the latter half of the sixteenth century — that, for instance, of Cardinal Paleotti and of Borghini (*Riposo*), or those of Romano Alberti, Armenini, and Comanini — are treatises upon morals and virtues, rather than upon the beautiful in art.<sup>1</sup> Pope Gregory XIII., in founding the Academy of Rome, declared that only artists eminent for science, piety, and good habits would be admitted.

"Jerusalem Delivered," when submitted to ecclesiastical censure, underwent all the rigours

<sup>1</sup> See "*De l'Influence du Concile de Trente sur la Littérature et les beaux arts chez les peuples Catholiques*," by M. Charles Dejob.



of the Church. There was no pardon for the poet who had allowed to miscreants any virtues, who had sung the love of Tancred for the daughter of an infidel, and, greatest sin of all, who had ventured into fairyland, with its charms and enchantment. "I would that your desire were not so much to be read by people of the world as to be enjoyed by monks and nuns" (*Che il poema fosse letto non tanto da cavalieri quanto da religiosi e monache*<sup>1</sup>). The writer of those words, one of Tasso's most severe censors, was a future cardinal, and the editor of the briefs of Sixtus V., being already a man of importance in the Church. "To pure morals and sweet and insinuating manners he joined a rigid orthodoxy and an unrelenting severity of opinion; with a cultivated mind he indulged himself in the composition of verses, but his thought turned only to devotional poetry."<sup>2</sup> And who was this person? Silvio Antoniano! Behold into what the amiable youth has developed, — the courtly lute-player of the festivals of former days!

They had passed away, those happy, smiling days of indulgence. The Reformation had despoiled the genius of Italy, and the Church, con-

<sup>1</sup> M. V. Cherbuliez, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

strained for her own salvation to rein herself in, did so with a terribly rough hand. For the better assurance of her safety, she thought it necessary to weigh down with punishments that yoke which the gentle Nazarene had said should be light. The arts dared look nowhere but toward heaven, and their heaven was not that of the "Theology," radiant with a multitude of cherubs, but that terrible scene of the Last Judgment, dark with storm, as the hand of Christ falls to crush the earth.

Years of sorrow followed; years of penitence in which Palestrina regretted as sins the less austere songs of his youth. Read the dedication of his "Song of Songs," addressed to Gregory XIII. in 1584. "There are too many poems which sing of loves, which are strange to the profession, and even to the name, of Christianity. To these poems, the works of erring men, a great number of musicians have consecrated all their talent and all their study. I blush at the thought of having been of their number, and daily do I grieve therefor; but that which is done cannot be undone, and as the past cannot be changed, I have, instead, changed the purpose of my life."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Extant nimis multa poetarum carmina nullo alio nisi amorum a christiana professione et nomine alienorum

For many years this spirit reigned throughout the church. Under its influence, Sixtus V. ordered the removal from the Capitol, under penalty of their demolition, of the antique gods which had profaned it, and by his order apostles replaced the emperors who had crowned the Roman columns.

So closed the sixteenth century, burning with too much ardour that which, with too much ardour, it had worshipped. Italy lay spoiled, grieving at the violence which she had done herself; weeping for that dream of serenity and joy with which the Renaissance, appealing to her eyes and soul, had enchanted both her senses and her faith; and now that sadness which she had but rarely known, and only through such geniuses as Dante, Savonarola, or Michael Angelo, appeared before her as the rule of life, as her duty and her salvation. She who, according to the happy expression of one of those who have best understood

argumento. Ea vero ipsa carmina hominum vere furore correptorum magna musicorum pars artificii industriæque suæ materiam esse voluerunt, qui, quantum ingenii laude floruerunt, tantum materiæ vitio apud bonos et graves viros offenderunt. Ex eo numero aliquando fuisse me et erubesco et doleo. Sed quando præterita mutari non possunt, nec reddi infecta quæ facta sunt, consilium mutavi."

and loved her,<sup>1</sup> seemed "to have added a beatitude to the Sermon on the Mount: *Beati qui rident*,"—she must unlearn and disavow all smiles. *Dies iræ, dies illa!* "On that day," says M. Gebhart, and no words could be truer, "On that day when the Church, menaced and tottering, turned upon herself that she might not altogether perish, and imperiously dragged Christianity back to austere discipline and dogmatic rigour, — on that day Italy lost half her soul."

### III.

Such a moment could not but produce and favour the growth of a music which was both religious and severe; and such was the character of Palestrina's work and that of his contemporaries. Worldly and such as may be called secular compositions occupied but a secondary place in the master's thought. The greater part of his madrigals, those called *spirituel*, are only pious canticles, and the others are treated almost in the same style and with the same feeling as the Church pieces. For instance, only the words constitute any perceptible difference between his celebrated madrigal "Alla Riva del Tebro" and any one of his motets composed for

<sup>1</sup> M. Gebhart.

the festivals of the Church, — that is, of course, the festivals of joy.

And nevertheless the piety of Palestrina's work has been disputed. M. Félix Clément in his "*Histoire de la Musique religieuse*," calls Raphael and Palestrina "the great destroyers of piety among the faithful." That one could cast such a reproach upon Raphael, I can perhaps understand, although, indeed, without subscribing to it; but upon Palestrina! He who connects those two names can be neither an enlightened historian nor a judicious critic, for if there be but a few years between the master of the Stanze and that of the "*Impropria*," there is still a great distance; little time divides them, but much thought. Raphael was the issue of the Renaissance, and may, perhaps, be said to have summed up its work and spirit, while Palestrina was in no way connected with it. The Renaissance did nothing and could do nothing for music, for the great movement was but the re-birth of the antique, and the music of the ancients had perished. No, — not absolutely all: there remained in the plain-song (the old Gregorian chant) a trace of it, more than half effaced, a scarcely recognisable vestige. Now, it is for having substituted polyphonic counterpoint for the old plain-song that M.

Clément accuses Palestrina of corruption and impiety. But stop a moment. Shall we say that the most appropriate music, — the only music suitable to the Christian religion, is it to be the débris and echo of that music now called ancient — once called heathen? We shall soon be suspected, and convicted indeed, of sacrilegious irreverence, because, forsooth, we pray not to the true God after the patterns set us by the ancient worshippers of the false deities! I wonder at the exceptional character of the reproach; and as it is addressed to both Raphael and Palestrina, I wonder at its inconsistency. For if Raphael is culpable in having introduced the element of the antique into Christian art, then Palestrina is not to be blamed for having once again banished it. Antiquity cannot at the same time profane painting and invest music with an added holiness. But may it perhaps be said that, in spite of the heathen origin of the plain-song, save for it sacred music never has and never could have existed; that, though the dogmas of faith change, the nature and essence of religious sentiment changes not; and that of this immutable Idea the plain-song remains the one simple, true expression, pure above all others, the most noble and the most beautiful? If this conception were true, we

should then have to absolve Raphael, for he has transferred the divine idea through the most absolutely simple and pure forms. But it is not true. It was the work of Christianity, after having learned what she could from the heathen arts, to transform them according to her great Ideal. Thus it was that the Romanesque in architecture, followed by the Gothic, a double polyphony in stone, succeeded to the primitive basilica, the plain-song of architecture. Who, then, will take umbrage at the architects of the world's greatest cathedrals and accuse them of impiety? Will M. Clément himself? Let us beware of narrowness and intolerance. Let us admire and, as far as it is possible, restore the plain-song, that grand old form of sacred music. But let not that restoration be to the prejudice, much less to the exclusion of the Palestrinian form; for this last, though its spirituality is in another style, is no less profoundly religious than its predecessor.

Palestrinian music, by its two essential, invariable characteristics, may be defined in brief as a voice-polyphony. Always written in several parts, it is never accompanied by any instrument whatsoever. From these two characteristics, we would endeavor to deduce the various qualities which it possesses.

In the first place, because it is exclusively vocal the music of Palestrina is more than simply religious; it is essentially a music for the Church. With the exception of the plain-song, it is the only form which subordinates itself entirely to the worship; which scrupulously respects the text, and which does not attempt to alter the length or arrangement of the religious ceremony. It is modern music which has unlearned this submission and deference. Open the mass in D of Beethoven himself. You will find therein much licence, if only in the changing of the text. This, for example: *O, miserere nobis*, instead of the simple *Miserere nobis*. But there are greater irregularities to be found than this supernumerary "O." Whereas, immediately after the intoning of the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, the choir should reply, *Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis!* it is the orchestra which responds in a passage of four measures, after which the voices, instead of continuing the proper text, take up again the words *Gloria in excelsis*, and repeat them during thirty-four measures!<sup>1</sup> All modern masses, stabats, and requiems — and we refer only to the most beautiful

<sup>1</sup> "Besprechungen und Kritiken. Kirchlich und weltlich. Eine Polemik und Replik," by M. Paul Krutschek; Haberl, Jahrbuch, 1894.



compositions of classic music — are filled with such infringements upon the text of the liturgy. Preludes and symphonic epilogues, *solì* for the instruments and *tuba mirum* prolong and enlarge the liturgical ceremony beyond all bounds.

The art of to-day, an art it is true which is often sublime, exists only for and in itself. Instead of being absorbed in, it absorbs the religious idea. Quite another is the art of Palestrina. Its existence is in and for the ceremonies of the Church. Here music effaces herself in the presence of thought, above all, before the sacred text, without which she would not have dared to make herself heard. Here, truly, is she the servant of the Lord, one in whom nothing is accomplished but by the Divine Word. Palestrinian music, necessarily liturgical by its adaptation to the Church services, is rendered still more so by the slight show and equipage which it permits. A few voices, and those softly modulated, suffice. It neither distracts the attention nor troubles piety by any material spectacle. It interposes neither a group of strangers nor a mass of instruments between the altar and the nave. Nor does it suffer the agitated silhouette of a conductor to break the noble perspective of the church, and conceal from sight those sacred rites which bestow

blessing and consecration upon the beholder. "By the exclusive use of the human voice," it has been said, "Rome sought to recall some shadow of those heroic days when the earnest choruses of the faithful could dispense with all hired talent."<sup>1</sup> Nothing could be more true. That theory, dear to the heart of the Renaissance, is not to be found here, — the theory of art for art's sake, of beauty in itself and for itself alone. Here one finds only men who pray, and God who listens.

They prayed with all their hearts, those men, and the dominating quality of their music is its depth, or rather its inwardness, — that psychological characteristic which the Greeks called its *ἦθος*. Palestrinian polyphony speaks to the soul of God only, and only of the soul to God.

Victor Hugo, in his romantic spirit, has imagined a Palestrina who has little in common with the old master. Doubtless the great poet knew nothing more than the name of the great musician, and, while admiring him much by hearsay, he admires him somewhat at cross purposes. He fails to comprehend, not only the genius of the time, but also that of the artist, claiming for the latter an origin most foreign to the truth.

<sup>1</sup> M. Dejob, *op. cit.*

Comme il s'est promené tout enfant, tout pensif,  
Dans les champs, et dès l'aube, au fond du bois massif,  
Et près du précipice, épouvante des mères !  
Tour à tour, noyé d'ombre, ébloui de chimères,  
Comme il ouvrait son âme alors que le printemps  
Trempe la berge en fleurs, dans l'eau des clairs étangs,  
Que le lierre remonte aux branches favorites,  
Que l'herbe aux boutons d'or mêle les marguerites.<sup>1</sup> . .

This page of beautiful poetry and bad criticism should be read to the end. It is indeed quite probable that the master of Præneste felt his senses quickened by the springtime of his Italy; that he gathered the April flowers on the Roman campagna, and listened to the nestlings and the running waters and at eventide to the bells "weeping," as Dante says, for the dying day. Doubtless he understood and loved nature, but nevertheless nature is not the mother of his genius, and absolutely, not a ray, not a smile has passed from her into his work, that work from which the outer world is banished. One never finds in it those landscapes which serve as backgrounds to the pictures of the Renaissance; indeed, which, two centuries before that, had served as a background to those open-air homilies, the springtime canticles of St. Francis. Alas, the

<sup>1</sup> Victor Hugo, *Les Rayons et les Ombres*. (Music dating from the sixteenth century.)

Renaissance had brought a curse upon the nature that she loved. Men no longer praised a sun of which they were afraid. They shunned the flowers among which the serpent hides, and no longer did they dare to preach to the birds under those trees whose sweet shadow they must flee.

Thus the music of Palestrina searches, as for a spiritual marrow, into the essence of the sacred text which it interprets. It expresses the idea and not the figure, and when Vincentio Galilei called Palestrina *quel grande imitatore della natura* he intended to do homage to the interpreter of that human nature within us which is made in the likeness of God. The inwardness or subjectivity of this music arises, in great measure, from the fact that it is exclusively vocal; indeed of all organs of musical expression, the voice is the most direct and intimate, the nearest to the heart, and that which resembles it the most; and thus it is that the Palestrinian music justifies, beyond any other form, the definition given to the art of music by a German theorist: *Kunst der Innerlichkeit*, — the art of the inner life. It is, in its very constitution, more an art of reflection than of action and drama, and is much less the representative of facts and things than of sentiments; rather a

sweetness that penetrates than a force that works ; it is the music of prayer, and, above all, of meditation. This is because of two of its essential elements. In the first place its *tempo* is equal and for the most part slow, and again the lines of thought are unbroken, almost horizontal, as it were. Listen, and look too at a bit of Palestrina. What do you hear and see? A *tempo*, now moderate, now slow, even very slow ; occasionally an *allegro*, but never a *presto*. Prolonged round notes follow, without haste, the calm rhythms ; quarter notes are rare, while as to eighth notes there is not one in the Marcelline mass, and probably not four which are contiguous, certainly not a full measure of them, in an entire volume of motets.

In a book, far too little read, by M. Sully-Prudhomme,<sup>1</sup> there is a page on the comparison of the beautiful in art, of which I was reminded one day, while at St. Gervais in Paris, listening to Palestrina's fine responses for Holy Week. "Each note," writes the poet-philosopher, "creates upon the mind, by its depth and intensity, a sensation incalculably more vivid than does any point of rhythm or measure in the lines. The element of sound-perception is therefore much more sensuous than the element

<sup>1</sup> L'expression dans les Beaux-arts : Lemerre.

of linear perception, and, for that reason alone the musical expression should be more passionate than the plastic. . . . Finally, whilst the line is continuous and therefore perceptible without any very sensible effort of the eye, the musical phrase is a composition of distinct notes, separated by varying intervals, and the passage from one note to another cannot effect itself insensibly to the mind." It would seem that, by comparing the style of Palestrina with these principles, one might gather a fairly just idea of the effects which it produces, and of their causes. He delighted in lengthening out and softening down all that which gives vivacity to the musical feeling, or which agitates and kindles the passions. Employing as he does the voice only, he uses but four qualities of tone, and guards against exaggeration in the intensity of the sound. As to force and effect, he prefers *mezza voce* and half-tints, and, finally and above all, he restricts the space between the successive notes, instead of spreading it out. His music does not permit wide intervals. The different parts move on step by step, crossing one after another the diatonic degrees, each note reaching out toward but one other note, and that near at hand, if not contiguous. The passage from one to the other is effected with no

great surprise to the ear, and with a continuity, which is linear, even horizontal. Neither brilliancy nor lyrical effect must be demanded from this style; nor fusees nor Gothic spires nor the saintly folly of the ogive are to be found in it; no excitements nor transports of the imagination; but, on the contrary, to taste its beauty to the full, the thoughts must be concentrated and gathered within one's self. The following is the subject and text of one of Palestrina's most profound musical meditations:—

“In monte Oliveti oravit ad Patrem: Pater, si fieri potest, transeat a me calix iste. Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro autem infirma.

“Vigilate et orate, ut non intretis in tentationem.”

“Upon the Mount of Olives Jesus prayed to his Father, O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.”

“Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation.”<sup>1</sup>

These words are sung by four voices, exceedingly *piano* at first, and very slowly; medium

<sup>1</sup> “Anthologie des maîtres religieux primitifs,” by M. Charles Bordes, founder and director of the “Association des Chanteurs de Saint-Gervais,” 1st year volume of *Motets*, p. 25.

and rather deep tones composing the elementary harmonies. The subject and scene are determined by the first six words and the first eight measures, with no attempt whatever at description. At *oravit* and *ad Patrem* the modulation sinks down slowly and heavily; from *Pater, si fieri potest*, the movement retards, as the slow, lingering notes appeal to our devotion with each word of the agonised prayer. *Transeat a me*, moans the soprano voice high above the others; *transeat a me*, they respond in softened union; and on the dominant—the note of uncertainty—the plaint expires with the response, *Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro autem infirma*. These words utter nothing else than a moral maxim; and this, with a kind of impassibility, the music expresses, not without marking at the same time rather naïvely, by two opposed movements, the willingness of the spirit and the weakness or languor of the flesh.

As to the verse *Vigilate et orate*, it is a marvel. The art of Palestrina, as has been said above, never bears a trace of the picturesque or external; and indeed, this arrangement of chords—for it is a simple chord passage—is to be found on many of the master's pages, which certainly are not to be interpreted in the light



of the picturesque.<sup>1</sup> But here, entirely by way of an exception, one seems to hear stealing through the music, whether or no it was sought for by the artist, a feeling of the country and of nature. Having felt this, one may at least suggest it to others. The conception adds a little of nature's beauty to the nobility of thought. It opens, as it were, a window upon the night of Gethsemane. *Vigilate et orate*, — watch and pray. Here we find a precept, which the music illustrates. That counsel — who gave it for the first time? To whom was it given, and at what moment? By the Divine One in his agony; to his disciples under the stars of the Orient, in the silence of nature's sleep. How, then, does Palestrina treat his theme? This *Vigilate*, so melodious in itself, above all when sung in the soft Italian accents, he confides to three female voices of the sweetest and tenderest tone; and these three, one by one, rest it on the three descending notes of a perfect chord. Passing thus from one to another, it floats through the sad watch like some word or signal exchanged by divine sentinels; then the vision so gently called up, fades away, and the

<sup>1</sup> For example, in the response following the words "Ecce appropinquat hora;" and again in an antiphon for Palm Sunday, "Pueri Hebræorum."

last measures, *ut non intretis in tentationem*, address themselves to the soul alone. Sensation has been joined to sentiment, though but for a moment, and, therefore, in these few lines is to be found one of the rarest of Palestrina's masterpieces.

Another is of the purely subjective order into which there creeps nothing of the outer world :

"Peccantem me quotidie et non me pœnitentem, timor mortis conturbat me, quia in inferno nulla est redemptio. Miserere mei, Deus, et salva me!"

"Sinning each day and unrepentant, the fear of death terrifies me, because in hell there is no redemption. Have pity, Lord, and save me."<sup>1</sup>

Such a prayer touches only upon the abstract, and if we feel, with Baini, that this motet far excels all others in its sentiment, pathos, and "imitation of nature," it is the spiritual nature only whose imitation we may admire and study.

The voices, confessing thus the daily habit of sinning, begin by repeating three times the introductory words, very low at first, the idea scarcely awakened, then louder, and, finally, with a threefold energy of a *mea maxima culpa*. The *et non me pœnitentem*, strongly accented,

<sup>1</sup> "Anthologie des maîtres religieux primitifs," 1st year book of Motets, p. 4.

marks the apogee of the musical *crescendo*, as it expresses also the climax of feeling, the failure to repent, more criminal than the crime itself; the hard-heartedness of desiring, committing, and continuing in sin. Then the *timor mortis* bursts forth in richer chords of superb fulness, the resonant notes vibrating as though hurled out by trombones; and suddenly to this burst there responds a plaint that is not even a cry, but a sigh of misery and desertion, a wail of fear as weak as a child's. *In inferno nulla est redemptio*. What is this hell of which they sing, and how does the music represent it? In the penitential days, when Palestrina's motet was sung in the Sistine Chapel, before Michael Angelo's fresco, the latter portrayed the image of hell, the former but the abstract idea; yes, the idea alone. These four voices sing despairing sadness and eternal punishment, but they imagine no pain; no material penalty, no violence is here, no weeping and gnashing of teeth, no limbs writhing in torture. Body and flesh are absent from this art; the soul alone is present and sensible of sorrow,—the soul eternally unhappy, alienated from God and weeping for the separation which is to have no end.

Then there reigns a long silence, as though in truth there were no salvation; but there is a

word which will procure redemption, and with what humility the *miserere* rests on the high soprano note. *Et salva me*, the voices repeat, becoming tender, even caressing, as they ascend and descend the scales in exquisite sweetness, their breath at last expiring upon a note of uncertainty, as the soul, in hope and fear, awaits the response of Divine mercy.

After having heard such passages, let the thoughts move forward, not even as far as the deafening *Tuba Mirum* and the dramatic "Dies Iræ" of our modern works, but pause at the "Passion selon Saint Mathieu," or Sebastian Bach's Mass in B minor. Think of the roll of those thundering fugues; of the fervid chorus filling the sonorous air; remember the sacred peals of sound, the movement and the excitement. Then come back to the motets of the old Roman master, to the few slow and solemn notes; and having admired action you will love repose. You will feel that it is beautiful to praise the Lord with dramatic strength and enthusiasm, but that it is sweet to adore him in contemplation, and in the aspiring worship of the praying soul.

As we shall see, the liturgical art of Palestrina, inner and subjective as it is, possesses two other characteristics, austerity and imper-

sonality. His music is austere because, if not harmony alone, it is harmony above all else, and harmony is music's most serious and severe element. Is it possible, then, to isolate melody and harmony, and to conceive of them independently the one from the other? Assuredly, yes. Nothing is more evident than that melody may dispense with harmony, but the latter too may possess its own existence and its individual beauty, without unfolding from its progressions any melody or song, as it is called. For instance, the first prelude in Bach's "Well-tempered Clavichord" was already beautiful, by the simple blending of its chords, before Gounod came, to add to it, or rather to extract from it, the melody which lay sleeping within.

In the same way, in one of Beethoven's most sublime and best known passages — the adagio from his Sonata in C# minor, one can easily distinguish and admire, separately, the melody and the harmony. Berlioz understood this perfectly. Speaking of the adagio he says, "The method is very simple; the left hand very softly brings out broad chords of a solemn mournfulness, the long duration of which permits the vibrations of the piano to slowly die away. In the treble, the lower fingers of the right hand carry a sustained arpeggio accompa-

niment, the form of which scarcely varies from the first measure to the last, while the other fingers utter a sort of lamentation, the *melodious efflorescence of this sombre harmony*.”<sup>1</sup>

Finally, and still nearer us in time, Wagner’s work, more clearly than any other, offers numerous examples of beauties which are exquisitely harmonic. In “Die Walküre,” for instance, as Wotan presses upon the eyes of Brünnhilde the kiss which dispossesses her of her divinity, listen to the sublime descent of chords that accompanies the fateful embrace. Certainly there is no melody, so called, in this chromatic sequence of isochronous chords. Harmony, then, may have an existence of its own, act alone, — as the Italians say, *fare da se*; and, having seen the proof of this, we may again safely assert that it is of harmony, almost solely, that the music of Palestrina is composed. It is seldom that one can detach any individual musical idea from this polyphony, in which the parts depend, above all, upon their reciprocal relationship, upon opposition and symmetry, imitations, response, and the interweaving of the counterpoint. The music of the old master knows no *solo*; its melody is constantly enveloped and involved in the harmony. Never does one voice sing accompanied

<sup>1</sup> Berlioz, *A travers chants*.

by the others, but all sing together, and accompany one another. The polyphonic style was the inheritance left to the sixteenth century by the Middle Ages, and the Roman master extracted all that was good in it for his own uses. "Palestrina himself," Vitet has well said, "was no innovator because he swept away pedantry, and lighted, by the pure rays of his genius, the latter part of the sixteenth century ; he neither proposed to invent, nor was it his thought to take a step in advance. His object was to re-establish that which had been altered. To use, exclusively, means which had been employed before his day, but to use them for the best that was in them, and to their utmost. He knew how to create master-works while conforming to the laws and exigencies of consummate harmony, permitting none but artificial dissonances, and, at the same time, drawing from the ancient system all that there was in it — and its last utterance."<sup>1</sup>

But if, further, it is asked why polyphony is more grave and austere in its form than melody, the answer is, because the former presupposes in the author, and requires from the hearer, more attention and effort ; a combination of notes gives us a less natural pleasure, and one

<sup>1</sup> Vitet, *Études sur l'Histoire de l'Art*, vol. iv.

more difficult to appreciate, than does a simple succession of tones. Melody, doubtless, is the primitive element of music, the one most accessible to the simple and ignorant, the music of children and of the people. Many popular melodies are to be found, but of popular harmonies not one. Melody is the form which awakens the senses, the external form, as it were, of art ; while harmony is the inward and reasoning idea. And if it be not true that all melody is light and frivolous, on the other hand it is certain that all light and frivolous music is melody.

Finally, the genius of Palestrina, liturgical, subjective, and austere, is likewise impersonal ; not that he lacks character, but that, on the contrary, he possesses universality, that distinctive mark of the highest genius. Polyphonic as it is, and consequently collective, vocal and intrinsically human, the music of Palestrina is not for some one of us, it is for the world ; it is not this or that soul which it voices, it is the Soul of the universe. Soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass — in their union the four voices embrace the strength of man, the grace of woman, and the purity of the child. All the passion and peace of existence vibrates through them ! all the joy and misery, all the energy and the weakness. All there is to be said they say, nothing exists



beyond them, and it is through them that humanity thinks, prays and worships, — not only all humanity, but the individual.

Above any other music, the polyphony of Palestrina realises that beautiful desire for unanimity, for which men's hearts eternally long, — the vision of universal accord in one Father, one spirit, one love. His is, indeed, the music of the universe, catholic in the true sense of the word ; the music of the great multitude whom Jesus pitied. All other sacred music, from that of Bach, Mozart, or Beethoven, to Verdi and Gounod, seems to recognise certain solo parts as the privileged interpreters of common thought and prayer ; but the music of Palestrina admits no distinctions nor prerogatives. In its fraternal union no voice disdains the others or dominates them. Here pride and self-importance are effaced. No one voice sings " My Father which art in Heaven ;" all sing together, " Our Father ;" and therefore it is that the Palestrinian polyphony is one of the most beautiful expressions in music, not only of faith, but of charity.

Palestrinian art, impersonal in its object, is equally so as regards its composer. In short, there is in this music, as there is in Gothic architecture, a general abstract, it might almost

be said, an anonymous character. The master of Præneste is less an isolated than a representative genius ; not easily and still less clearly is he to be distinguished from some one of his predecessors, such as Josquin des Prés, or from Orlando di Lasso or Vittoria, his two great contemporaries. Though we recognise the virtues by which he excels these brother artists, the one by his fervour, the others by his broader, warmer and more religious, if not more pathetic style, though we well understand and aver the importance and efficacy of the reform accomplished by him, it is none the less true that this reform was not a revolution, and that Palestrina, while he purified and simplified the tradition of the Middle Ages, did not join issue with it. He was, indeed, a great Italian, but among great Italians he was an exception, and this by reason of the foreign origin of the polyphonic style, and the times, already studied by us, in which he lived. Italy had not given birth to the art which Palestrina carried forward even while changing it. Vocal counterpoint is not a product of Latin soil, and though it flourished, and with splendour, in Rome, it did not germinate there. The characteristics of Palestrina's music, its subjectivity and austerity, its profound and, as it were, canonical piety, are not essential

features of the Italian genius ; the latter does not possess them as a rule, merely at times touching upon them, as though by accident. It did, indeed, encounter them, however, in Palestrina's century, as in Dante's, and by an equally glorious chance.

In this great musician, one studies less the concourse than the conflict of the three primordial forces which Taine considers the generators of art : the race, the environment, and the moment. In the last half of the sixteenth century, a time the gravity of which we have considered, the moment created an environment not in accord with the Italian race, or rather the Italian soul, and which affected the genius of the nation for years. Of this altered soul, depressed by the influence of the Gallo-Belgian soul and the severity of the times, Palestrina was the grandest interpreter, and thus it is that he is less a witness to his race, than to his time. It was of a certain Italy that he was the musician, and not of the Italy which preceded, or which followed, the sixteenth century. " Their music," says Taine of the Italians, " their rhythmically clear, singing music, agreeable even when tragic, opposes its symmetries and smooth cadences, its theatrical, eloquent, brilliant genius, limpid but limited, to the instrumental

music of Germany, — that genius so grandiose and free, even vague at times, so fitted to voice the most evanescent dream, the most secret emotion, and that ever unslaked thirst of the serious soul, which, in its mysticism and lonely inspiration, looks forward into the infinite and the beyond.”<sup>1</sup>

In this double criticism is it not the second part, referring to Germany, which, with the exception of two or three words, will apply most fittingly to the music of Palestrina? And again, when Taine writes of the Italian imagination “It engages itself less with the foundation than with the exterior, it prefers the outer decoration to the inner life; it is more idolatrous and less religious, more picturesque and less philosophical, more limited and more beautiful,” then over against this definition, too narrow by reason of its nationality, against this reproach and this praise, do you not seem to hear, off there in the last echo of the Roman basilica, that more human than picturesque genius of Palestrina, — that genius, which was inward and not decorative, purified from all idolatry, and profoundly religious?

But if, in some lights, the master of Præneste

<sup>1</sup> Taine, *Philosophie de l'art*, vol. i. (*La Peinture de la Renaissance en Italie*).

is outside of and perhaps above his race, in others his race speaks through his voice ; his work was Italian, for he laboured with simplicity and clearness. He was the first to break through the crust of ice under which the Middle Ages had imprisoned music from the rays of the Italian sun. Then it was that air and light clarified and brightened polyphony, and, slowly, melody disengaged herself from harmony. Vague still, but perceptible, she appeared in the masses, but above all, in the motets, of Palestrina. On the surface of the sonorous waves she blossomed and smiled, that melody which is the soul of Italian music, which is, indeed, the music itself of Italy.

Born of Palestrina, in the sixteenth century, melody develops in the centuries which follow. The masters whom we are about to study, Marcello, Pergolese, and their disciples, make melody more and more Italian or Latin. That is to say, they give to it form and character. Then comes the Golden Age of melody, and two centuries after the Renaissance of the other arts, the tardy but brilliant Renaissance of music. Yes, in this new birth of music are to be found again the chief characteristics of the great revival, the emancipation of the individual and the conception of art for art's sake. Melody

usurped the place of polyphony, because it was individual and the representative of the personal in music. Moreover, it was admired and worshipped for itself and its beauty, and from its birth was adored, as it soared above all control. Then from one end of the peninsula to the other the famous "Com' è bello !" was the universal cry. And then music, less religious and less serious, became external, ornamental, and joyous, and that half of her soul which Italy had lost in Palestrina's time, she found again in the days of Marcello.

MARCELLO.

TO MONSIEUR TADDEO WIEL, LIBRARIAN OF SAINT-  
MARK'S, VENICE.

Marcello: Two sonatas for the violoncello with piano accompaniment by Alfredo Piatti; Simrock, Berlin. — Four sonatas for piano and violoncello, transcribed from the original by M. A. Moffat; Schott — “Arianna, intrecchio scenico-musicale”; vol. iv. of the “Biblioteca di Rarità musicali,” per cura di Oscar Chilesotti; Ricordi. — “Estro poetico-armonico, Parafrasi sopra li Salmi;” poesia di Girolamo-Ascanio Giustiniani; musica di Benedetto Marcello, Patrizj Veneti;” 2 vols., Venice, 1803; Sebastiano Valle. — “Il Teatro alla moda,” fac-simile edition from the 3rd edition; Ricordi, 1883. — “Le Théâtre à la mode,” translation, preceded by a study on the life and works of Marcello, by Ernest David, and a preface by L. A. Bourgault-Ducoudray, professor of the Conservatory of Music, Paris; Paris, Fishbacher, 1890. — P. D. Francesco Fontana: “Vita di Benedetto Marcello.” (At the beginning of the first volume of the Venetian edition of the “Psalms” above mentioned there is to be found an Italian translation of this Biography, which is written in Latin. — Caffi: “Storia della musica sacra nella già cappella ducale di S. Marco in Venezia, dal 1318 al 1797.” Venice, 1856. — Zaccaria Morosini: “Benedetto Marcello e la sua età;” Venice, 1882, — L. Busi: “Benedetto Marcello, musicista del secolo xvii<sup>o</sup>; sua vita e sue opere;” Bologna, N. Zanichelli, 1884. — P. G. Molmenti: “la Storia di Venezia nella vita privata;” Turin, Roux & Favale, 1880.



## MARCELLO.

IN studying any form of art it is well not to limit one's thoughts to the strictly individual life of any one master, but to consider the development of the art itself through his life who has best realised its most complete representation. That form of art which we shall now study may be defined in two words as Italian melody; the artist in whom it is personified is Benedetto Marcello. But why choose the genius of this old master as typical of our subject? For many reasons, some of which, I admit, reason herself would disavow; chiefly, perhaps, because of a far-away but still charming romance which haunts the thoughts. When Consuelo filled the vaulted arches of the Venetian church "with that unequalled voice and the victorious pure accents" which George Sand gave to her, she sang before old Marcello, and it was Marcello's famous psalm which she sang: "*I cieli immensi narrano.*" "My child," said the old man to her when she had

finished, "accept the gratitude and the benediction of a dying man. In one moment thou hast made me forget years of mortal suffering. If the angels sing as thou dost, then is it my aspiration to leave this earth, to feast upon an eternity of such delights as these of which thou hast given me a foretaste." How many times, lingering on a summer night near Marcello's old palace<sup>1</sup> on the Grand Canal, have we hoped for — almost expected — such another voice to rise and send towards heaven the glorious canticle. On such a night, more than five hundred years ago, there came in truth a poor daughter of the lagoons, Rosanna Scalfi, singing under the window of the young *maestro*. From his balcony he called her, for he fain would see her whose voice had charmed him; and for the lovely face, linked with such marvellously sweet tones, he made the 'nocturnal songstress, first, his pupil, then his wife.

But there are more serious reasons than those of romance or reverie for choosing Marcello from among so many. He was born nearly a century

<sup>1</sup> The Marcello Palace is at present occupied by Bialotto & Co. (cabinet-makers and wood-carvers). It overlooks the garden of the magnificent Vendramin-Calergi, where Richard Wagner died on February 13, 1883. (M. Busi, *op. cit.*)

after the death of Palestrina, and during that period the Italian genius had created melody. Thus the great Venetian represented a time, not of formation, but of perfection, a unique moment of beauty achieved ; less a ray than a focus of light, he represents the perfection of melody, which is summed up in his works. His genius is the apogee of maturity and of bloom.

Nor is this all ; he alone amongst his contemporaries and fellow-citizens has left us something more than fragments of his genius ; works worthy of immortality, of which, at least one, his "Psalms," is stupendous ; and, finally, the great composer was not a composer only. *Grand seigneur*, poet, critic, member of the Councils of the Republic, Overseer of Istria, Camerlingo of Brescia, — *uomo universale*, as the Italy of the Renaissance used to call her most illustrious children, — none is more worthy of remembrance and honor than Benedetto Marcello, patrician of Venice, and prince of musicians.

## I.

He was born on July 24, 1686, of a noble race and to a noble life. His name, as the family fain would have believed, could not,

perhaps, trace itself back to the *gens* Claudia, and yet Marcello could boast of a long and illustrious line, dating as far back as the eighth century, according to an historian of the Venetian aristocracy. It was in 1473, when a Marcello was doge, that the Bellini painted the story of Frederick Barbarossa in the Grand Council Hall of the Ducal Palace, and it was likewise under a Marcello, that the doges were forbidden to have their own figures struck upon coins in any other attitude than that of kneeling before St. Mark. Marcello's parents, both of them illustrious as to their blood, were no less distinguished in mind. His mother, a Catello, left manuscripts of poetry, which, unhappily, perished by fire in the library where they had been preserved; and his father was a *dilettante* in the deepest sense of the word, possessing a love for beauty, and all the tastes, with some of the talent, of an artist. He, too, wrote verses as well as played upon the violin. He brought up his three sons, Benedetto, Alessandro, and Girolamo, with the true spirit of an artist, early demanding of them elegance and urbanity in manners and language; carefully guarding their childhood from everything low and vulgar, he suffered nothing but politeness, grace, and distinction in their daily conversation.

One of the three brothers, Alessandro, studied the violin with the illustrious Tartini, and Benedetto himself took lessons for a time of the master, but he was soon disheartened, by the mechanical difficulties of the instrument. One of his biographers, with little susceptibility, apparently, to the beauties of symphonic music, declared that Benedetto was destined *all' altezza della musica vocale*, and not to *semplici sinfonie istrumentali prive d' anima*. *Prive d' anima!* Instrumental music destitute of soul! With relief may we appeal from such a strange judgment to the sonatas for piano and violoncello of Marcello himself. Soon, then, abandoning the violin for composition, which, with all its absorbing attraction, little by little took entire possession of him, Benedetto became the pupil of Gastarini, then chapel-master of the Pietà in Venice, who, when he died, occupied the same position at St. John Lateran in Rome. Marcello, a zealous pupil from the first, soon became impassioned, almost to folly, with his work. It is said that, during the three seasons, from his seventeenth to his twentieth year, the future author of the "Psalms" gave ten hours a day to the study of harmony and counterpoint. A scholar with the strength to endure such an apprenticeship should issue from it a master,

and such, indeed, was Marcello's achievement. But although much had been done for his genius by this ardent work, still more had it been fostered by the good fortune of high birth and a privileged education. Predisposed by a favorable heredity, brought up in the noble luxury of his father's palace, early familiar with the masterpieces with which its libraries were filled, and brought always in contact with men eminent in all branches of learning, following his vocation without obstacle, and screened by his position and fortune from disheartening trials and degrading struggles,—the young Benedetto breathed into his soul a spirit of magnificence and dreams of beauty from the atmosphere of his brilliant Venice.

In those days, when the human plant, as Taine says, "overflowed with sap," one individual might fill many places of duty; and Marcello, called by his high birth to the discharge of public functions, not only did not shirk the responsibility, but filled the positions most worthily. The great artist lived and died a good servant of the State; to the end he deducted first his portion of work and duty from the life in which his genius was a luxury only, its ornament and flower, as it were. On December 4, 1706, by a special act of favour, and

before he had arrived at the customary age, he was allowed to draw from the urn the golden ball — the *barbarella*<sup>1</sup> — which made him a member of the Grand Council. His first musical compositions were already being given, with success, at the Casino dei Nobili, in the concerts which had in those days a great reputation; and it was about this time that he published many works of vocal polyphony, in the form of madrigals and church compositions, one of which gained his admittance into the famous Philharmonic Academy of Bologna. There existed between himself and one of the most distinguished women in Venice, Madonna Isabella Renier-Lombria, an attachment which was affectionate, if nothing more, — a relationship, at all events, which united them in their love of things intellectual and artistic; at her house, as in former days in his father's palace, he was in daily intercourse with the first musicians and the first poets of a city where all was poetry and music. Musician and poet himself, he constantly gave proof of his double talent. Now he would write a cantata, "Calisto in Orsa," for example, or "Timoteo," the subject of which, taken from Dryden, has been treated by

<sup>1</sup> So called because it was annually drawn by lot on St. Barbara's day.

Händel also, in his "Alexander's Feast." Or, again, it would be a volume of sacred sonnets, or of less pious verses perhaps, accompanied by some such profound epigram as the following, which contains within itself a theory which is artistic, even moral, and the rarest promises of natural and of holy faith. *Pianger cercai e non del pianto onore*, "I have sought for tears and not for the honour of weeping." The beautiful, sane, almost holy words are a fitting motto for sincere grief, condemning as they do those martyred grimaces which are feigned sorrow's lies. Happy they who weep in simplicity, but wretched those who, contemplating their own grief, draw only vanity from their tears.

But Marcello was far more the friend of good cheer and gaiety than of tears. The great artist was a great jester, and the spirit of criticism and banter pervaded his creative genius. No one doubts to-day that he was the author of an anonymous treatise which appeared under the title of "Lettera familiare d' un Accademico Filarmonico ed Arcade, discorsiva sopra un libro di duetti, terzetti e madrigali a piu voci." The duos, trios, and madrigals which it so severely criticised were the work of the great Antonio Lotti, a confrère of Marcello. Those not informed on the subject have thought the



paper a bitter and envious criticism, doing little credit to the character of the writer; but, in truth, the work, though sometimes severe, is just, and, in the place of jealousy and resentment, it simply raises a standard to be fixed by science and conscience, unassailable principles and purity of taste.<sup>1</sup> "I hope," Marcello began, "herein to discourse and reason with such clearness that the author himself will rejoice in my praise; and that my blame—if blame I must—will leave him convinced if not persuaded of his own faults. I say convinced, for you know well that to accomplish so much, one need appeal only to the intelligence, while to persuade one must have the will of him who is addressed. Now the will, being a faculty distinct from the intelligence, may refuse to confess its defeat; but it will not be able, by such indocile refusal, to prevent the intelligence from surrendering to the truth."

Surely this is not an unkind criticism. However, courteous as were his arms, Marcello hastened to lay them down, when petitioned by a third party, and rather than wound or even annoy such a master as Lotti, he abandoned his half-accomplished work.

But he did not accord and, indeed, did not

<sup>1</sup> M. Busi, *op. cit.*

owe such regard to all men. Once, merely to embarrass the singers, many of whom were but indifferent musicians even in his time, he devised an Ensemble, some parts of which were written in D# and some in E♭. Another time he set to music a letter supposed to have been written from Bologna to the celebrated cantatrice Vittoria Tisi, which read as follows :

BOLOGNA, Dec. 6, 1718.

"MY DEAR GIRL, — By reason of all my occupations, past and present, I am enjoying very poor health, and for days past have been fairly beside myself. Fortunately for us the opera season closed last Sunday. Ambreville left the same night for Turin, Muzzia departed yesterday for Mantua, Spagnuola, for her part, is off to Leghorn, and to-night Coralla and Sartina leave for Brescia. Heaven be praised, I shall enjoy a little repose, and recover from so much fatigue. . . .

It is said that Marcello embroidered this pretended letter from an *impresario* with the most absurd music, in which he cleverly parodied the style, manners, and faults, even to the smallest eccentricities, of his contemporary composers and *virtuosi*.<sup>1</sup>

But of all *virtuosi* it was the eunuchs who most excited Marcello's spirit of raillery. One

<sup>1</sup> Fontana, Busi, *op. cit.*

day he gathered together in his home the singers of St. Mark's, under pretext of having them decipher the two following madrigals for four voices, which he had composed expressly for them :

MADRIGALE PRIMO.

*(Per due tenori e due bassi.)*

I.

No, che lassù ne' cori almi e beati  
Non entrano castrati,  
Perche è scritto in quel loco.

Here the sopranos interrupted with

Dite che è scritto mai!

The tenor and basses reply :

“Arbor che non fa frutto arda nel fuoco.”

Whereupon the sopranos screamed at the tops of their voices,

Ahi! ah! ah!

MADRIGALE SECONDO.

*(Per due soprani e due contralti.)*

II.

Si, che laggiù nell' Erebo profondo  
Ove alle fiamme vassi,  
Cadran tenori e bassi;  
Perche scritto già fu da sacri vati:  
“Quei che castrati son saran beati!”

To such a use does the future author of the "Psalms" turn the sacred text ; and yet without displeasing his readers, for his work is the evidence of an unshackled genius, whose freedom is not the dupe even of its own art. It does not suggest the pedant, but, as Pascal says, "an honest man" and a patrician. Such always was Marcello. Such we find him again in "*Il Teatro alla Moda*," his masterpiece in criticism, and one of the most biting satires in existence on the theatre and theatrical people, on charlatanism and charlatans.

His youth and fancy had roamed at will over the stones and waters of Venice. "He lived," writes Fontana, "in great honour, which was well merited by his poetical and musical talents ; continually were sweet praises sounded in his ears, as daily he took part in feasts, spectacles, and all kinds of fêtes and gay assemblies. Without doubt this sort of life is full of danger, and still he never abandoned himself to his passions so far as to compromise his genius. The sacred truths of his faith had taken deep root in his mind, and he fulfilled in a most exemplary manner all the duties of religion ; and yet, carried away continually by the blind instincts of nature, which were importunate and violent within him, it is not to be wondered at that the fear of

future punishment did not suffice to check him."

If, up to this time, Marcello had not consecrated his genius to God, the moment was fast approaching when he would do so unreservedly and in all the brilliancy of his maturity. He had a friend, Girolamo-Ascanio Giustiniani, like himself a gentleman, musician, and poet, who having attempted the translating or rather the paraphrasing of the Psalms of David, submitted a fragment of his work to Marcello's criticism. The latter, according to Fontana, praised the elegance and easy strength of his friend's genius. "Then," said Giustiniani, "as you do not disdain to approve of my modest poetry, why do you not clothe it in music, which shall be suited to the gravity and sacredness of the subject? The effort is worthy of you, and will be received with the enthusiastic gratitude of all men." And immediately Marcello set himself to the task which has proved the admiration of the world. Highly praised first at Venice, later in other Italian cities, solemn performances of the "Psalms" were soon instituted at Rome; and abroad the success of the work was no less speedy and brilliant: in England, but especially in Germany. A German *Kapellmeister*, named Telemann, wrote to Marcello, —

“In your sublime and imperishable ‘Psalms’ there reigns a majesty which all masters before you have failed to enthrone. Harmony, melody, unaffected symmetry — one cannot but admire all!” And again Matheson, *Kapellmeister* at Hamburg, thanked Marcello for the “Psalms,” which he had just received, in these words: “Your Excellency, uniting firmness to sweetness and pleasure with edification, has found new and untrodden paths in lieu of the disjointed and fatiguing counterpoint, which up to to-day has constituted our church singing; and whereas heretofore men have said, ‘Hail Palestrina!’ ‘Hail Marcello!’ now will be their cry!”<sup>1</sup>

But many writers of those days go further than these Germans in their praise, for they assure us that these “Psalms” worked pious as well as artistic conversions, and led souls to the true Faith. In any case they were the first means of converting their author, and of completely changing his manner of life. “Having undertaken this task,” writes Fontana, “salutary thoughts and desires awoke within him, goading him on by day and by night. . . . When he sang his ‘Psalms,’ for he joined his voice with the others, his face and eyes seemed to kindle with light.”

<sup>1</sup> Caffi, *op. cit.*

He himself has said in the first of his "Sonetti a Dio": "Already have I lived eight lustres — Alas! How shall I write it? To have lived such a life as mine — I might rather write it down a veritable death; — plunged, as it has been, in mire and deprived of Thy favour."

"Otto lustri gia vissi; ah! come scrivo  
Che vissi, e vissi tanto! anzi degg'io  
Morte vera chiamar quel viver mio  
Nel fango involto, e di tua grazia privo."

Accusing himself, elsewhere, of having debased his genius to low and earthly uses, he cries: "How many notes — profane notes — this hand has traced, when the strength of my best years was mine! And what remains to me of it all, — what fruit of those long hours, spent in vain?"

"Ma quante, quante ancor note profane  
Questa man non segno, quando mi prese  
Musica a miglior anni! E qual rimane  
Frutto d'ore sì lunghe invano spese!"

His hand refused, henceforth, to trace these "profane notes," — a slight accident, in which he thought that he received a supernatural warning, completing the change begun within him. On August 16, 1728, as he was hearing

mass in the church of the Holy Apostles, a gravestone gave way beneath his feet and he fell to his waist in the opened tomb. At the time he felt no uneasiness from the incident, but, that night, as he lay in bed, he could not sleep, and all through the long hours the thought haunted him: "Where should I be now, if I had been laid to-day, not living but dead, beneath that gravestone? And yet some day it must come — and alas! I know not when!" All the sins of his life passed and repassed before his eyes, till for the first time he felt pangs of true contrition, then repentance; and recovering on a sudden his inward peace, he fell asleep. Rising with the dawn, he cried: "Behold a transformation, accomplished by the hand of the Most High (*Haec mutatio dexteræ Excelsi*)!" and from that moment he gave himself body and soul to God. "I have had the honour," wrote a contemporary, "of meeting his excellency, Benedetto Marcello. He paid me every civility and desired me to dine with him; but he is entirely different from his old self, leading the life of a saint. He gave me a book of sacred poetry, which is truly sublime, written by himself."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Gio-Antonio Riccieri to P. Martini (April 24, 1733) in the "Carteggio inedito del P. Martine coi più



This latter may have been the last book on which Marcello worked,—his poem on the Redemption, which he left unfinished. The work, divided into three parts,—The Expectation of the Messiah, His Coming, and His Ascension,—treats also of Letters, Science, and Art, in their relations to the Faith. His, doubtless, was an analogy which merely anticipated that one which was afforded to the world later in the “*Génie du christianisme*.” It bore on its title-page the following lines, in memory of the author’s conversion :—

“*Eduxit me de lacu miseræ, de luto fæcis,  
et immisit in os meum canticum novum, carmen  
Deo nostro.*”

In 1733, Marcello, who for a long time had been a member of the Council of the Quarantie, was appointed overseer of the Venetian Republic at Pola, in Istria. He suffered much from the unhealthy climate of the latter place, and in three years returned to Venice, much broken in health. He was then sent as Camerlingo (treasurer) to Brescia, at the foot of the Alps, and under these soft skies he lived the last three years of his life, dividing his time between the discharge of his duties and the *celebri musicisti del suo tempo;*” Bologna, Zanichelli, 1888.

practices of his "ardent piety." During this time he went on a pilgrimage to Caravaggio to obtain or rather to ask for a cure which would have been nothing less than a miracle. But he prayed in vain ; death awaited him on his return to Brescia. When his last moment arrived, he received the messenger calmly, and even, so say his biographers, with the sweetness of an angel. He died in sanctity on July 24, 1739, and was buried at Brescia, in the church of St. Joseph of the Franciscans, where his tomb may still be seen.

And who then raised the stone above the remains of this Prince of Musicians, — Philologist, Poet, Questor of Brescia, and Patrician of Venice? — for the inscription gives him all these titles. His confrères in music or poetry, his colleagues in dignities and offices, his equals by fortune and birth? No. It was, so the inscription testifies, but a poor woman, his wife, — *uxor mæstissima*, she whom we have eliminated from his biography as he eliminated her from his life, though not perhaps from his heart.

The Venice of the old days forbade to her children a *mésalliance*, and Marcello could only unite himself to the humble Rosanna in a clandestine marriage. But he honoured her, for

she was as virtuous as she was beautiful, and established her, with her mother, in a retired palace, where she lacked nothing of the consideration and state of which she was worthy. Thither he carried to her secretly the masterpieces of his genius and his love. She was the first to sing for him his psalms and cantatas, with the voice which had won him years before, — her voice, “which,” says a biographer, “was flexible and brilliant as a pearl (*nitida come la perla*) and which filled the soul with peace.”

But always he had been obliged to leave her, called by duties and by pleasures which she might not share — death alone could give him to her eternally. Though she could not be his radiant wife, she might be his grief-stricken widow, and the title which in his lifetime had been refused to her, she could assume by his tomb.<sup>1</sup>

## II.

As we have already said, Marcello, no less than Palestrina, was a representative genius. It

<sup>1</sup> “Se un nobile sposava una schiava, una fantesca o femina da villa ovvero qualunque altra de abieta e vil condizione, decadeva, insieme coi figli, dal beneficio della nobiltà, e diveniva soltanto cittadino originario.” — P. C. Molmenti, *op. cit.*

was because he was as much a type as a personality that his life may be chosen as the brilliant record of that form of art, that beautiful Ideal, which has been christened Italian melody.

An Ideal which is abolished, and a beauty which is dead! So the younger generation, drunk with new wine, cry to-day, in their blind ingratitude! For blind are they in very truth, who do not see that the true life of works, as of men, begins but at their death. Doubtless the music of the future will manifest itself less and less in simple melody; and in that sense it might be said that Italian melody is dead. One does not hear in these days the "Psalms" of Marcello, nor his Sonatas, any more than one sees students copying Veronese's "Marriage at Cana." Such makers of the gods as was old Phidias are seen no more, nor such architects as they of the Parthenon or the Gothic cathedrals, nor, indeed, such writers as Racine or the author of "Don Juan"; but are these styles of beauty, then, — all these grand art-forms, — dead? Yes, doubtless they are dead; and yet they are immortal, and in spite of time will live for ever. Nothing of their beauty shall fade away, nothing of their life can die, — and it is in this sense that Italian melody lives and shall live through all time.

"We shall never see it again!" say they. Without doubt, and therefore must we love it the more. "Love," the poet said in his wisdom,

"Love that which you will never more see."

But, in fact, we already see something that closely resembles the old Italian form. Does it not reappear, modified, perhaps, but still recognisable, in the works of that most worthy inheritor of the old Italian masters? "*Torniamo all' antico*," said the musician of "*Othello*" and of "*Falstaff*," suiting his work to his words. These two operas look toward the past no less than toward the future, and the old blood of the Latin race pulses through each page of the two works which are, at the same time, so modern and yet so classically Italian.

But the renegades from Latin melody are worse than blind and ungrateful, for they attack their nursing-mother, their *Alma-parens*, "who comes to us from Italy, and who came to her from Heaven." Musset should have so written of melody rather than of harmony, for it was indeed from Italy that the former came to France, — to all northern races, including the Germans themselves, whose genius even to the first works of Beethoven was ever half Italian. With the

exception of Bach, and we must not ignore the depth and height of that exception, the breath of the South stirred all the music of Germany. We cannot but see, for instance, how closely Händel follows along Marcello's lines, and that all the power and splendour of the Anglo-Saxon is first to be met with in the works of the old Venetian master. And though we know that Haydn thought as a German, we feel that the inspiration of his songs came from Italy. Mozart was the brother of Virgil, and the young Beethoven promised to be nothing but a second Mozart, though in his mature genius he gave to music an imperishable form, which has become the characteristic art-form of his Fatherland. Each day the Germany of Weber, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Schumann widens the distance between herself and Italy. The last few decades have beheld the violence with which Wagner consummated the irrevocable rupture; but it is but just to keep in our memories the sacred glory of the primitive alliance.

With the reservations always necessary in the use of general formulas, we may divide all music into two parts, giving the symphony to Germany, and to Italy melody. Germany possesses the symphonic soul: her motto is the "*Symphonialis est anima*" of the saint of the

Middle Ages. Italy, on the other hand, has been inspired from all time with the soul of song: the one people retires within itself to the chorus of secret harmonies; the other pours forth its melody to the world.

It was Italy who freed the first line of song from the counterpoint of the Middle Ages. Having received the polyphonic form from the countries of the North, she carried it to its perfection, then shattered the creation and drew out from the debris a new musical genius. Remember the "*Peccantem me quotidie*" of Palestrina, that master doubly great by virtue of the past which he buried and the future which he ushered in. Truly, the sublime beauty of this page is still in its concerted harmony, and yet there lies within it a charm of song and a unity of design, from which one day melody would issue. Little by little, melody detached itself from the restraint so gradually relaxed, and, as music passed from the church to the theatre, lyric 'action necessitated the abandoning of polyphony for the recitatives of a single voice. The dramatic pastorals performed in Florence during the last ten years of the sixteenth century, were nothing less than such recitatives. In February, 1600, some ten years after Palestrina's death, a "*Mystery*" of Emilio del Cavaliere's was given in the

Oratorian Church of Santa Maria in Valicella at Rome ; at Florence, in October of the same year, the first operas were given on the occasion of the marriage of Maria de' Medici with Henry IV. Thus in the "Orfeo" of Peri and Caccini, and the "Cephalus" of Caccini, the last months of the great polyphonic century beheld the birth of melody, — a birth which, during the two succeeding centuries, developed into splendour.

The names, far too much ignored, of many masters of genius, punctuate the records of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, men who left to the world great works, which, alas, are still less known than the lives of their authors. In those days lived and worked Carissimi, Cesti, Carvalli, Caldara, Lotti, and last, and perhaps greatest of all, Marcello. How noble and pure was melody in the flower of her youth ! At Mantua, Ferrara, Venice, — throughout all Italy, in joy and in grief, men sang, and their songs, pouring from full, open throats, grew daily more beautiful in their glad freedom. Without harmony, almost without accompaniment, song was sufficient unto itself, as it gave voice unstintingly to the genius of the Italian soul ; it lived and moved in itself alone — *faceva dá se*.

Melody could not but result from such a



soul and genius ; she was the necessary and natural product of her native land, resembling, and voicing the Italian people. Above all else, the new form was simple, existing by successions and not by combination ; without being as elementary as the note, it is the pure musical form ; far more so than harmony, and above all, than symphony, of which it forms the subject-matter. But more than this, melody seems to possess a more concrete character than harmony ; a something which is more plastic and sensuous. It is through the ear that it first gives pleasure ; and if the intelligence partakes in the enjoyment, it is by some elementary operation which costs but little effort.

Now those characteristics of simplicity, definite realism, and personality are, in the highest degree, characteristics also of the Italian spirit, or shall we not rather say of the classical Latin spirit, — the soul of antiquity ? Therefore it was that ancient music was almost exclusively melodic, and that melody must and did reappear in Italy. As marbles and bronzes slept beneath the ancient soil, so melody, but in a slumber of more than two hundred years, lay floating in the air. One day, by I know not what divine interposition, there was a mustering of those millions of sonorous atoms, of the innum-

erable sighs which had escaped from Grecian lyres in the olden times ; once again all human joy and sorrow crystallised itself into song, and melody awoke to usher in the Renaissance of music.

That Renaissance, though tardy, as all the great events in musical history have been, took complete possession of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And with the true spirit of the Renaissance, — that universality which expressed itself in a desire to study all science and in a love for all things beautiful, — with such a spirit was Marcello imbued, — the musician who was a statesman, the patrician who was a poet. His preface to the “ Psalms ” reveals a profound knowledge of and fervent admiration for antiquity. Not only are Cicero, Aristotle, and Plato, “ the divine philosopher,” quoted at each page, but even the principles of the ancient music were revived and honoured by the Venetian. Throughout his work Marcello sought to demonstrate the superiority of melody over harmony ; for him melody is the noblest part, — the head, or the heart, rather, of music ; she is the supreme means of expression, the sovereign and sole dispenser of emotion. It was because she was melody and melody exclusively that music had power, of old, to work miracles, never failing in her mission

of moving the inner chords of the soul (*l'effetto suo proprio d' internamente commovere.*) “It is a grave error,” says Marcello, “to imagine that the simplicity of ancient music was an imperfection; on the contrary, therein lay one of its greatest virtues. It is true, that in later times, tones and voices have multiplied, from which fact our songs, no doubt, are become more replete with elegance and passion; more studied, too, because containing more thought and harmony by reason of the diversity of voices and the mingling of dissonances with consonances; — and more brilliant by the varied accompaniment of instruments.” But any development of music in such a direction is no enhancement of her intrinsic beauty; and if masterpieces of musical art are produced to-day which touch the soul most profoundly, it is always through the melody within them rather than by reason of a brilliant polyphony (*piuttosto per opera della melodia, che dello strepitoso concerto*). Therefore it was, so Marcello tells us, that having undertaken the “Psalms,” which demanded above all a forceful expression of word and sentiment, he resolved to write the music so far as possible for two voices only, thus allowing the expression more scope and beauty.

In passing he makes a criticism upon the music of his day, accusing it of vagueness, and thus characterising his contemporary art as opposed to the ancient. If in Marcello's time this criticism was just, it is far more so to-day; indeed, it may well be used to describe one aspect of modern musical evolution. Music, infinite in her aspirations flatters herself more and more each day that she may become infinite in form. Think of all that she has lost in the way of breadth and form, since the classics of Bach, or even since the death of Beethoven. How are her contours weakened and her barriers effaced! Far from affirming and defining, as was her wont, she now glories in faint indications and suggestions. Her strong reality, her being, formerly so present and tangible, resolves itself more and more into an illusive and ever receding vision.

Therein lies her progress, say some, while there are others who fear for her peril; in any case, that the change exists, is incontestable.

And quite to the contrary of all this, what formal personality and what an objectivity the music of Marcello possesses! It is almost superfluous to call attention to the fact that the development of the individual was one of the principal characteristics of the Renaissance.

Perhaps no one has better expressed this idea than Burkhardt: "In the Middle Ages," he says,<sup>1</sup> "man recognised existence only in the light of race, people, party, corporation, family, or, in fine, under some general and collective form." He learned through the Renaissance to know himself, to develop his individual existence, and under this new form, a new art must necessarily arise to represent his emotions.

"In Italy the society of the higher circles loved song, . . . but not music written for many voices, because a single voice could be better heard, enjoyed, and judged. In other words, because — notwithstanding the conventional modesty professed by every one, — singing is in reality nothing but the exhibition of the individual in society, and each one may be heard and seen best when alone."<sup>2</sup> Thus, as in all important æsthetic phenomena, it is possible to find at the base of Italian melody an important psychologic phenomenon: the reign of melody is nothing else than the manifestation in and through music of Renaissance individualism. The music of our day, instrumental and symphonic, has been described by Amiel as a

<sup>1</sup> Italian Civilisation during the Renaissance.

<sup>2</sup> Burkhardt. *Ibid.*

music for the crowd, while that of two centuries ago was, on the contrary, the voice of the individual.

Such a musical individuality was noble, proud, and vigorous; in every particular, that being of force and beauty which the Renaissance created throughout all art. To be convinced of this, one has but to read a certain sonata in F major, written by Marcello, for piano and violoncello; we cannot but feel that it is full of strength, pride, and nobility, nothing doubting that they who most contest the power of music to express feeling, must agree with us. Psychological terms come instinctively to the lips of one who attempts to analyse even the first measure of the sonata's first Largo. It is impossible to praise this work, which seems possessed of a veritable person and soul, in any other than personal words. Will it be averred then that it is thus that praise loses its value? Quite the contrary is true. M. Paul Bourget has well answered the adversaries of the existence of moral or ethical beauty in art, when he asserts that in literature, as in painting, architecture, and music, he only sees varying but equal manifestations of "the degrees of human sensibility. Now whether it be transmitted through written words or orchestrated sounds, by stone carv-

ings, tones, or colours, this sensibility is one and the same. The one question beyond the mere technical cleverness is that of Soul."<sup>1</sup>

Let us then follow this "Soul" through the old master's sonata. Beginning with the first measure, why is it that this well-marked rhythm seems so natural to our ears? Because we have long known and loved it in a modern work familiar to all musicians,—Schumann's "*Études symphoniques*."<sup>2</sup> But in the latter work we find the passage modified by alterations which are moral, as well as musical; from the major it is become minor; pathetic triplets quiver through it, in place of the former sustained accompaniment, in such a way that in these two measures, at once analogous and contradictory, two points of view and two souls appear in the music: the one firm and exact, the other vague and troubled. The former was the Latin classic soul, that spirit which, to again quote M. Bourget, in those periods of time which were both broad and restricted, gave to the best Italian music, as it did to the great poetry of Italy, "that charm of definite conclusiveness which is the true mark of the Latin genius. It is at the same time grave and

<sup>1</sup> M. Paul Bourget, *Études et Portraits*.

<sup>2</sup> *Étude*, No. 2.

grand, retaining its strict traditions and still never unlovely or conventional. When we come in contact with this Latin genius at its best, the old expression of taste, unperturbed by conventional criticism, regains its true significance, and we understand what intellectual virtue it possesses. It has, indeed, other and more touching traits, but these are its sovereign characteristics.”<sup>1</sup>

The Venice of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a fitting frame for the melody of the Renaissance. The beautiful old city was in the full enjoyment of her riches—and of her decadence. The magnificence and pomp of the Venetian civilisation, the national appetite for ceremonies, assemblies and feasts, and the innate spirit of the people all favoured the growth of music;—everything in nature itself, even to that ever-present, silent, Venetian water, which seems to quiet into silence only that the Queen of the waters may hear her people sing.

Since the last half of the sixteenth century dramatic and musical allegories had been presented at the palace of the Doges. On St. Stephen's Day, 1571, for example, “*Il trionfo di Cristo per la vittoria contra i Turchi*,” was given before the Doge Aloïse Mocenigo. “Already,” says

<sup>1</sup> M. Paul Bourget, *Sensations d'Italie*.



Molmenti,<sup>1</sup> “already *quegli uomini allegri non avevano tempo per annoiarsi* (this joyous people never found time to be bored).” In another representation, during 1581, the retiring year was to be seen, with *divertissements* and fêtes, taking leave of the Doge, and, as they did him homage, the voices sang: “Where shall we find so happy a reception? Here the gay and merry days bring with them naught but glad pleasure. Here—as in Paradise—with virtue reign peace, fêtes, and smiles.”<sup>2</sup> Then there arose, in the play, a philosophical debate between a Stoic and an Epicurean, which was interrupted by the entrance of a Sibyl, who silenced the argument with a hymn in honour of voluptuous Venice.

Less than a century later, in 1669, Sansovino wrote: *che la musica aveva la propria sede in questa città*. Music and music alone triumphed, in the midst of the decadence of the other arts. Sixteen theatres opened in Venice

<sup>1</sup> La Storia di Venezia nella vita privata.

<sup>2</sup> E in qual loco mai  
Troviam miglior ricetto  
Ch’ in questo? Giorni qui felici e gai,  
Rendon doppio diletto;  
Qui come in Paradiso  
Con virtù regna pace e festa e riso.  
(Quoted by M. Molmenti, *op. cit.*)

between 1637-1699; and at the beginning of the eighteenth century there existed in that city four of those famous girls' conservatories, or "Hospitals," of which such travellers as de Brosse and Burney wrote with such enthusiasm, — the Institutions of the *Mendicanti*, *Incurabili*, *Pietà*, and *Ospedaletto*. "The music which transcends all other here in Venice," writes President de Brosse in 1739, the year of Marcello's death, "is that of the hospitals. There are four of these homes for girls who either are orphans, or whose parents are unable to rear them; educated and cared for at the expense of the State, the children are especially taught to excel in music. They sing like angels, and play as well upon violin, flute, organ, oboe, violoncello, bassoon, — in short, there is no instrument large enough to frighten them. They live cloistered like little nuns, and are quite unassisted when they perform in public, making amongst themselves an orchestra of forty girls. I assure you, there can be nothing more lovely than to see one of these pretty young sisters, in her white robe, with a cluster of pomegranate blossoms behind her ear, conducting her orchestra and beating time with all the grace and precision imaginable. Their voices are adorable in poise and flexibility—our French fashion

of drawing out the tones seems quite unknown among them. One Zabetta at the *Incurabili* is especially wonderful for the compass of her voice and her resonant, string-like notes; for my part I made no doubt that she had swallowed Somis' violin! <sup>1</sup> She it is who receives all the applause of the populace, and it is as much as one's head is worth to compare any one else with her; but listen, my friend, while no one is within hearing, and I will whisper in your ear, that a certain Margarita, of the *Mendicanti*, is well worthy of praise, and pleases me the best."

But this music was official as it were, the property of the State, and it did not suffice; the people too, the crowd, must have its music. "On this piazza which looks over the sea," writes P. Fontana, "where the people assemble to gossip and breathe the fresh air, — on this piazza, which they call the most beautiful in the world, songs are for ever to be heard. The Venetian women who sing them have such a delicate ear, and such is the grace and elegance of their mother tongue, that one would believe the humblest and most ignorant among them to be not only exquisite singers [*pulitissime di canto*] but daughters of a noble race."

Burney writes: "One hears nothing but

<sup>1</sup> Celebrated violinist of the day.

songs everywhere ; if two persons only walk together arm in arm, they seem to sing as they talk ; and it is quite the same if they are on the water in a gondola." It was in those days that the beautiful Anzoletto met Consuelo, "the little Spanish girl, singing devout canticles before the shrine ; and he, for the pure love of using his voice, sang with her under the stars, the long evening through."<sup>1</sup> Such a crowd made its way into the *Mendicanti* and the *Pietà* on Sundays and feast-days, that the Signory was forced to make special rules concerning the hours and form of the services. Every evening during the fine weather there was a concert, so that by day and by night the whole melodious city sang.

And now, looking back for a moment, let us carry our eyes to the Rome of Palestrina's day. We are in the sombre Sistine chapel ; above sit the wrathful prophets, below a group of old men listen to the sad psalmody of the "Improperia," seated about a pontiff who, enthroned beneath the menace of Michael Angelo's Christ, himself menaces the Roman people. Sad voices sing of man's sorrow, of sin, — the cause of all suffering, — and of the Divine death. The terrible fresco threatens the world through the

<sup>1</sup> Consuelo : George Sand.

gathering gloom, as, one by one, the wax tapers die out, and in the lowering shadows, where no sound, no ray from the outer world may penetrate, those sad voices follow the sacred plaint of that century of penitence and rigour.

One hundred and fifty years later, in Venice, it is a century of joy that sings. Let us enter the *accademia della Cavallerizza*, so named because it once served as a hall for the equestrian exercises, in the athletic games of the Renaissance. In one of its beautiful salons Marcello once a week gathers together an audience worthy of his masterpieces, — artists, gentlemen, and the loveliest of Venetian women, dazzling in their beauty and elegance. To-day a “ Psalm ” of the master is to be performed : the choir consisting of four sopranos, six altos, six tenors, and four basses ; the orchestra of eight counter-basses, some 'cellos, and a *cembalo* (harpsichord), before which Marcello himself is seated in gala attire. Instead of the old austere verses, joyous canticles ring through the hall. Little by little, towards the sunset, a crowd gathers about the windows from which such melodies escape, and the gondoliers, pausing to listen, stand leaning upon their oars. Without a strong touch of sanctity — free from liturgy and less sublime, without doubt, than the sad

accents of the Sistine Chapel — still it is a beautiful vesper-song, this of Marcello's, and grandly religious : " *I cieli immensi narrano !*" Through the open windows, the voices borne on the winds of the Adriatic rise into the blue immensity of the Venetian sky, carrying the homage of a glorious lyric art to the God to whom the very blue itself bears witness.

### III

The music of Marcello was essentially lyric. Indeed, most of the music of his time may be described as such, for that of the theatre was but newly born, and an opera in those days consisted simply of a series of airs, or lyric monologues, connected by some insignificant recitative. "All the scenes are in recitative," wrote President de Brosses, "ending always in some grand air, at the close of which he who has rendered it, because he has sung his song, retires, and another, because his is yet to be sung, remains. I find that they [the Italians] do not understand in the least the connecting of the different scenes." Certain it is that the Italians have been among the last to comprehend the necessity of unity in their dramas. To bind together the scenes, thus establishing a connection between parts

heretofore independent of one another; to make one body of the separate members, enveloping it with a tissue of homogeneous flesh, through which might circulate the life-giving blood; to close up the gulf which lay between the recitative and the melodies, or as M. de Brosses says, — between the weak and the strong, — was a work reserved for the nineteenth century, and of the labourers therein, the most prominent have been the German and the French.

And yet, in spite of modern development, the “strong places” in those old operas, those lyrical rhapsodies, were beautiful, often sublime; such, for instance, as are to be found in Marcello’s “Arianna,” a work little known, but well worthy of study. “Ariadne, my sister, with what love wounded.” — Such is the subject; but in Marcello’s opera, the royal damozel (*regal donzella*) is careful not to die, as she lies forsaken. The Italian libretto, which lacks neither poetry nor passion, is not wanting in gaiety. It turns Theseus into something of the hero of a modern operetta, and Ariadne, mad in his pursuit, emulates in turn the Elviras, who were equally in love, but not equally noble, of “Don Juan,” and “M. Cryptogame.” Theseus, to rid himself of Ariadne, that he may fly with

Phèdre, finds no better means of escape than to make a gift of his pursuer to Bacchus, charging him to console her. Bacchus accepts, and being successful in his efforts, this novel arrangement is most satisfactory to all, including that acolyte and confidant of Bacchus, the counsellor of optimistic philosophy, fat old Silenus, whose laugh breaks out all through the tragi-comedy.

If one discovers a trace of "La Belle Hélène" in "Arianna" it is only in the libretto; the music bears not a semblance of parody, and suggests Gluck rather than Offenbach. It suggests him and more than once equals him in its strength and grandeur, and its conclusive and striking truth of expression. I know a plaint of Ariadne's—*Come mai puoi — Veder mi piangere?*—which the cries of Alceste scarcely surpass. It would be interesting and not difficult to rewrite this page with two or three chosen instruments; a flute *à la grecque*, a moaning oboe, and a mysterious horn should envelope without stifling the lovely melody! Here we are once more with the antique Ariadne of the Vatican,—Racine's heroine,—*Ariane aux rochers contant ses injustices*.

The musician's phrasing is as beautiful as the



poet's verses, in the same strong, grave beauty, without ornament or figures.

Two of the Silenus airs also are fine : the one in which the jocose god wonders to find his master so susceptible to love's temptations : —

“E piu tenace  
Di vischio o rete  
Il crine, il guardo  
D'una belta ” —

“More strength to hold than line or lacing hath the hair — the very glance of beauty !” The song is superb in its irony ; through it there falls again and again an avalanche of thundering violins, while the basses rumble beneath in mocking thirds. Imagine some bassoons in their proper place, and you have all that a modern master — the Verdi of “Falstaff,” for instance — might add to rejuvenate this old-time product of the Italian genius, a masterpiece of truth and life.

Again we find the same breadth and heroic grandeur in another air, in which Silenus vaunts the exploits of his master to Ariadne : —

“Nel paese ove il sol esce fuora,  
Migliaia d' uomini  
Col forte braccio  
Fece in pezzi, abbattè, sconvasso.”

“ In the land of the rising sun, thousands of men, by his strong hand, have been broken, beaten, and crushed.” Whilst an extraordinary vocal *tremolando* gives to the “*sconquasso*” an accent of wild buffoonery, the minor tonality of the first verse evokes the poetry and mystery of the far-off Orient. In the lines of André Chénier we find a picture of this god-conqueror of the Orient.

“ Viens, ô divin Bacchus, ô jeune Thyonée,  
O Dionyse, Évan, Iacchus et Lénée;  
Viens, tel que tu parus aux déserts de Naxos,  
Quand tu vins rassurer la fille de Minos.  
Le superbe éléphant, en proie à ta victoire,  
Avait de ses débris formé ton char d'ivoire.  
De pampres, de raisins mollement enchaîné,  
Le tigre aux larges flancs de taches sillonné,  
Et le lynx étoilé, la panthère sauvage,  
Promenaient avec toi ta cour sur ce rivage.  
L'or reluisait partout aux axes de tes chars.  
Les Ménades couraient en longs cheveux épars,  
Et chantaient Évoé, Bacchus et Thyonée,  
Et Dionyse, Évan, Iacchus et Lénée,  
Et tout ce que pour toi la Grèce eut de beaux noms.”<sup>1</sup>

It is such a gracious young god, who comes forth at the voice of the musician, more glorious even than the divine hero of the poet. In what magnificent equipage does he appear, and with what acclamations is he saluted! Grand

• <sup>1</sup> André Chénier.

sonorous cortège from which Händel might have drawn the triumphant gladness, the sumptuous resonances, even the diatonic accent of his famous *Alleluia*. But one thing even the colossal Anglo-Saxon could not borrow from the Italian,—the grace that followed upon the strength; the second chorus supplementing the first; the three or four pages, no longer in honour of the warlike god, but of the mystic deity who married the vine to the young elm.

“Viva dell’ olmo e della vite  
L’ almo fecondo sostentator!”

It is Italy alone who may sing of the wedlock of the tree with the sacred vine, giving to the festoons of her melody that exquisite curve of the delicate tendrils, which in the late summer days run riot over the trees, down there in the sweet Venetian country.

And lastly, if, as I hope, you care to study this work to the end, read the last chorus, in which Ariadne receives from Venus that crown of stars which still gleams through the night sky in her name. This chorus is antique and verily god-like in the purity of its line, the simplicity of its modulations, and the gravity of harmony and ornament. Amiel speaks somewhere of a certain transient point, at which the

poet-thinker must seize his idea and sentiment to fix it eternally, for, says he, "it is the supreme point, it is the moment of his Ideal."

As inevitably does this point come in the history of an art, or of a form of art, as in the life of an artist, and in the history of Italian melody it arrived with the birth of Marcello.

#### IV.

The opera of "Ariadne" is an exception in Marcello's life-work; he had but little esteem for dramatic music, suffering with bad grace its conditions, necessities, and compromises. And as for the people and the environments of the theatres, no one has cast more ridicule upon the petty vanities and absurdities of both; he was not deceived as to the inferiority of plays and players.

What harm is poetry not capable of doing to music? "Empty poems," writes Marcello,<sup>1</sup> "are those to which the music of our day is obliged to subject itself! Such poetry, far from making music our worthy and majestic guide toward philosophical speculations, degrades it and renders it unworthy of our esteem. (And yet,

<sup>1</sup> In the preface to his "Psalms."

alas!—there are those who rejoice in it!) Such music is capable only of exciting the weak and voluptuous passions of men. (If only it were confined to the theatres, and never admitted into the House of God!) It no longer serves to bring us honest and calm delight, in the building of our characters, the awakening of our courage, or the inspiring of our respect toward the Almighty and toward lovely things.”

Above all other poetry, the old master deplores that of the opera; a satirical prologue<sup>1</sup> has recently been published, which was written by him at the expense of a certain “*Pastor fido*,” given in 1721, in the San Angelo theatre, at Venice. It was arranged by Pasqualigo after Guarini’s “*Pastor fido*,” and set to music by Carlo Pietragnua. Then, as to-day, the works of poets were arranged to suit the music, and the following shows Marcello’s ideas upon the subject. It is the shade of Guarini who speaks: “So I shall hear a silly, vain people sing, in corrupt scenes, the labour of so many weary nights and days! O ill-spent days and nights! O ye paths of the Greeks and Latins, so

<sup>1</sup> “Un prologo e un sonetto satirici di Benedetto Marcello,” edited at Venice (Fontana, 1894) by M. Taddeo Wiel, librarian of St. Mark’s, on the occasion of the marriage of Count Andrea Marcello with the Countess Maria Grimani-Giustiniani.

vainly followed ! O Tuscan flowers gathered unworthily from sacred Parnassus, for they are making of you useless, shameful garlands wherewith they deck profane brows ! And thou, whoever thou mayst be, who dost rejoice in my punishment, poet — I must, indeed, acclaim thee a poet, impious and inhuman ! Alas ! must I be destroyed ? Is it indeed necessary that my sacred songs be defamed by sorcery and witchcraft, for the pleasure of vulgar fools ? ”<sup>1</sup>

What do our modern libretto-makers think of such a protestation ? Are they secure in the conviction that the shades of Dante, Shakes-

- <sup>1</sup> Ma sentiro da sciocca e vana gente  
 Cantarsi ad uso di corrotte scene  
 Quella di tanti giorni  
 Ed altrettante notti ardua fatica.  
 Oh ! giorni ! oh ! notti adunque  
 Mal spesi ! Oh ! invan seguite  
 Greche scorte e Latine ! Oh ! toshi fiori  
 Indegnamente colti  
 Nel sacro Parnaso,  
 Se formarne dovean si  
 Inutili ghirlande e vergognose  
 A tempie sì profane !  
 E tu, chiunque sia  
 Che del mio strazio esulti,  
 Poeta (il diro pur) empio, inumano,  
 Deh ! perche lacerarmi,  
 Deh ! perche ad allettar l'insano volgo  
 Formi incanti e malie con sacri carmi !

peare, Goethe, or Schiller, if they should linger in opera-house or theatre to-day, would not cry out in the words of the old Italian poet ?

Again it is to the poets of the opera that Marcello, in his pamphlet, "*Il Teatro alla Moda*," gives the first place and aims his first arrows. From his first chapter, devoted to them, and in the one following, addressed to composers, one may extract perhaps not a philosophy—a word too ambitious and pedantic here—but abundant, fine, and profound ideas upon music and poetry.

There is not a question of importance among those discussed to-day which Marcello does not review: what subjects do or do not lend themselves to music; the abuse in musical dramas of incidents and sudden changes, and a too complicated action; the inconveniences of an exaggerated scenery; the necessity of a librettist being a true poet, but a poet who is musical or capable of musical feeling. Upon many such subjects, Marcello casts a look and says a word: a word always ironical, and a look of mockery. Here, for instance, are some of the counsels which he bestows upon the poets:—

"In the first place, the modern poet should never have read and must never read the old

Greek and Latin authors, for the simple reason that the ancient Greeks and Latins have never read the moderns.

“ Neither should he be well acquainted with the metre of Italian verse, but may possess simply a superficial notion that it consists of seven or eleven syllables, and with this rule, he can compose, as he likes, lines of three, five, nine, thirteen, and even fifteen syllables.

“ The modern poet will pay no heed to the style of his drama, reflecting that it is to be heard by the vile multitude. . . . He may transport his dramas from the French to the Italian, and change prose into verse, turning the tragic into the comic, adding or subtracting from the rôle, according to the will of the director. . . .

“ He may lend to his piece, as accessories, prisons, poignards, poisons, letters, bear-hunts, bull-fights, earthquakes, arrows, sacrifices, etc., in order that the public may be well stirred up by such novel spectacles. . . . ”

Passing from the poet to the composer, Marcello treats them no less severely : —

“ The modern *maestro* should cut short the sense of the words, especially in the great airs, letting the artist separate any one verse from its fellows, — though in itself alone it may have no meaning, — and immediately after it intro-



ducing a long flourish for violins or violas. . . . He shall accelerate or retard the movement of an air, according to the caprice of the singers, and shall hide the dissatisfaction which their insolence causes him by telling them that his reputation, his credit, and his interests are in their hands, and that therefore he must alter, without demur, airs, recitatives, sharps, flats, or naturals. . .

“When the singers shall have arrived at a *cadenza*, the director shall silence all instruments and leave the virtuoso free to prolong his *cadenza* at his will. The master shall pay but little attention to the *duetti* and choruses, and shall endeavour to write his piece so that they may be suppressed at the will of the performers.

“If such words as *Padre, Impero, Amore, Arena, Regno, Beltà, Lena, Core*, etc., or adverbs such as *no, senza, già*, etc., should chance to come in a song, the modern composer shall write for them long roulades; so that they may be pronounced thus: *Paaaadre, Impeeeero, Amooooore, Areeeena, Reeegno, Beltàààà . . . Leeena, Coooore, noooo, seeenza, giàààà.*”<sup>1</sup>

Marcello pursues to the bitter end the theatre

<sup>1</sup> This is what President de Brosses called “plays on vowels.”

of his day. He denounces the æsthetic anarchy against fundamental laws; the constant sacrifice of principal to accessory, of the end to the means, of truth to convention, — in one word all the abuses and vices through which the Italian opera of the old days was doomed to perish.

But it is not to poets and composers alone that Marcello addresses his satires. His book, as its title announces, is for the benefit of “singers of both sexes, directors, instrumentalists, mechanics, painters, buffoons, costumers, pages, supernumeraries, prompters, copyists, guardians and mothers of the actresses and other persons attached to the theatre,” — a nomenclature which is a satire in itself; and yet — alas! — all these are necessary to the representation of a lyric drama. To this work of art, all these people, — unless perhaps the two last — all this mediocre crowd is indispensable. In such a concourse of the arts, some have imagined that they saw the highest dignity of the theatre, not to speak of the trades; but Marcello, and perhaps with more reason, saw therein only inferiority and degradation. He doubted the genius of the crowd of intermediaries and interpreters; knowing that musical thought is but a reed which the world only too often rises to crush. It was

for this reason that no object or creature in that world of the theatre found grace in his sight; the two chapters, or epistles rather, to singers of both sexes, are masterpieces of insolent irony:—

“The modern *virtuose*,” he says, “should never study his sol-fa, in order that he may escape the danger of placing his voice well and of singing truly, and in *tempo*, etc., all of which are contrary to modern usage.

“It is not necessary that he should know how to read or write, that he should pronounce his vowels well, utter his consonants, simple or double, distinctly, or understand the meaning of the text. He should on the contrary confound words, letters, and syllables to be successful in creating tricks which are in good taste, such as trills, appoggiature, cadenzas, etc.

“He must pronounce in such a way that, in the ensemble parts, it will be impossible to distinguish a syllable. . . .

“He shall pay no attention to other actors, who, following the words of the drama, address him.”

So much for what may be termed artistic satire; but the pitiless author of “*Il Teatro alla Moda*” adds yet a moral sarcasm. According to him the psychology of lyric comedy had reduced

itself to vanity, pretension, petty rivalry, and low jealousies. "The singer shall continually complain of his rôle, asserting that it is not written to suit his talents, or he should cite an air by some other composer, telling at what court and before what great lord he has sung it and with what applause (to the winds with modesty) his hearers called him back as many as seventeen times in one evening. . . .

"For fear of taking cold he should always keep his hat on his head even when in the presence of some person of quality; and when saluting the latter, he should not uncover, reflecting that he himself acts the parts of princes, kings, and emperors."

As to the cantatrice, still less does Marcello spare her and her retinue of *Madame sa mère*, *il Signor Procolo*,—her guardian, her cat, two dogs, and the rest of the menagerie to which Signor Procolo gives food and drink.

Gain an audience with the Prima Donna, "She will tell you that as soon as the carnival season is over, she intends to be married; that, indeed, she has long since promised her hand to a man of quality. If, in her ingenuousness, the cantatrice refuses to accept a watch, *Madame sa mère* hastens to scold her, saying: 'It is easy to be seen that you do not understand common

politeness ! How can you act with such rudeness to a gentleman of so much courtesy !' She, herself, will accept the gift from the stranger, in the name of the young lady, exclaiming : ' Pardon her, most illustrious sir, for it is the first time that the little fool has ever left her own country.' "

Read, read it all ! The character study is worth as much as that upon art, — more perhaps, — and will certainly survive the latter. Things have changed since Marcello's time, but only things ; the theatre has reformed but not the comedians ; and these will not reform sooner than the rest of mankind. Some features of this double satire of "*Il Teatro alla Moda*," may not be applicable to-day to our theatres, but others still touch and will for ever touch upon all that is lasting in the whims and absurdities of certain characters and conditions of life.

## V.

Disdaining the theatre and disgusted with the world, the pious old aristocrat had now no other resource but to take refuge in sacred lyrics ; and for the inspiration and subject of his masterpiece, — of his fifty masterpieces, I may well say, — he turned to the Psalms. We have seen

how the subject was first presented to him. He took it up with an enthusiasm, and something, too, of religious awe; but above all, with the noble ambition of bringing his art back to that ideal that it seemed about to betray. "I have chosen a holy labour and a divine subject," he says in the preface to the "Psalms," "which is none other than the poetical translation of the Holy Psalms, that I may furnish to music a worthy subject in which she may make herself heard in the real efficacy of her serious beauty; and that she may be used in the worship of Divinity; not as an equal of ancient music, for forms and times are changed, but, at least, according to the rules of consecrated custom."<sup>1</sup>

We have fifty of Marcello's "Psalms," not translated literally, but paraphrased after the text of the Prophet-King. They, with Bach's cantatas, are perhaps the strongest and grandest examples of classical music in lyric art. What the Lyric is in art we should be at no pains to know since M. Brunetière's Sorbonne lectures:

<sup>1</sup> "Per renderle adunque un degno argomento, di farsi udire nella sempre utile sua gravità naturale, e se non efficace al pari dell' antica per la differenza delle leggi e dei tempi, almeno conforme nell' uso consacrato al culto della Divinità, si è cercato un lavoro di sacra e divina materia, quale si è la presente poetica traduzione dei 'Salmi.'"

“Of all branches of art the most intimate and personal; not only in its essential being and expression, but also in the strong external, almost material, form which it wears.”<sup>1</sup>

Quite as much in music does the lyric art strongly assert the personality of the artist. Schumann has proved this in our century, but more than a century ago Marcello bore witness to the same truth; and if, as M. Brunetière<sup>2</sup> further shows: “In all places and in all epochs of history, lyric art has needed for its development the growth of individualism,” then it may be that the composer of the “Psalms” was a great lyrist, if only because he was a master of melody, — the individualism of music.

In the “Psalms” melody reigns triumphant; it is the one interpreter of the soul, and through it alone is treated the grand, unique theme of the work, — the Idea of God. Is M. Brunetière, then, justified in his complaint<sup>3</sup> that this theme is not sufficiently resourceful for lyric art? Doubtless there are but two ways in which man may conceive of or represent God: either the idea of the Almighty must be personified, or His name must be accepted as the syno-

<sup>1</sup> Evolution de la poésie lyrique en France au xix<sup>e</sup> siècle: M. Brunetière. Paris: Hachette.

<sup>2</sup> *Id. op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*

nym of the Awful and the Unknowable ;<sup>1</sup> and of these two conceptions, while the latter might be more that of the philosopher, only the former can be adopted by the artist. But infinite variety lies in this first conception. Art has been able to create countless representations of a personal God, — at once Creator and Saviour, a God of the humble and the strong, of the Law and of the Gospel ; a God Who punishes and Who pardons ; Christian dogma is wide enough to recognise, comprehend, and authorise all. And here we see how Marcello's God was not the God of Palestrina, or, rather, how differently the two masters understood the Deity. In that House of many Mansions great saints and great artists shall not serve the Father with virtues and with masterpieces which are identical in their nature. A cell was Palestrina's home, while a Venetian palace was necessary to Marcello ; the music of the one was full of contemplation and ecstasy, that of the other all action, sacred transport. The motets and responses of Palestrina meditate here below upon that God Whom men adore ; while the " Psalms " of Marcello pour themselves out towards the same God from heights glorified with admiration and devotion.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*



There is little of intimate inward thought in these "Psalms," Marcello being no master of the inner life. He has been named the Michael Angelo of music because there is so little of the tender and gracious in his work, and yet, after all, there is much sweetness. When the Psalmist, turning his eyes from the Lord and from himself, lets them fall, for a moment, upon the earth; when he seeks in the flower and the water-course a poetic emblem of his soul, or the fragile image of his own weakness, then the music becomes modest and humble; it breathes forth the freshness and the peace of nature, and falls into accents of kindly emotion. Such a psalm, naïve as a canticle, expresses alluringly the perfect abandon of the soul in the hands of God, — an abandon which Fénelon believed to be that of a little child.

But to me, Marcello's power is more to be admired than his sweetness, — now in the assurance of his faith and the impetuosity of his prayer, now in the tragic emotion of his repentance. Treated thus, in pathetic cantatas and grand, bold recitative, religious music must come forth from the church out into the world; though still sacred, it ceases to be liturgical, and requiring applause it creates enthusiasm. The glowing and triumphant "Psalms" are the

most characteristic works of Marcello's genius. Veritable odes of music, how clear and high they rise in their beauty, and, above all, with what sudden bursts of emotion do they spring forth! The great masters of melody alone have possessed the secret of these tremendous attacks, — the *débuts*, which are real explosions of sound; a Palestrina never knew them.

“I cieli immensi narrano  
Del grande Iddio la gloria.”

Every one knows the striking beauty of this most famous of Marcello's “Psalms.” Whose heart has not been stirred by the uplifting attack of the first movements, — that *ἀρσις*, as the Greeks would say, with which almost every page of the heroic music opens? First a single voice pierces the air, tracing the flash of melody through the tonic and dominant, and immediately the chorus responds with the same melody, more beautiful in its repetition and development; a second time it reaches the dominant and seems to break there, the brilliant flashes detaching themselves only to sink together anew into their former orbit.

This music was the rough draught, as it were, of what was to be, in days to come, the symphony. In many different positions, now major,

now minor, the motive reappears again and again. *Il firmamento lucido*—It was well-named the Psalm of the Firmament. One of the voices seems to place the notes like the golden nails of the constellations; another, motionless in the centre, is the pivot upon which the whole harmony turns, as turns the vault of heaven upon its divinely given axis. This is the visible heaven,—a heaven not of souls but of stars, chanting their sublime canticle. Verily never before was it sung with such grandeur! The Marcello of the “Psalms,” and especially of this “Psalm” which we have been studying, appears to us for the last time as he was from the beginning to the end of his work. We must see in this radiant external beauty—this splendid apotheosis—not only a great Italian, but a great Venetian. Is there then a Venetian school of music as there is of painting? Is there as evident and close a tie between Marcello and Venice, as between Venice and Titian, for example? Is it possible to disengage or deduce an ideal of sound as of colour from the climate, atmosphere, aspect, and character of a city? Can it be demonstrated that this music of Venice is as thoroughly a daughter of those skies and waters as is her painting? Assuredly no; the affiliation, less

direct, is likewise less apparent; and yet it exists, and music, though a less faithful mirror than painting, is nevertheless a mirror.

In one of Veronese's pictures, it is as though one contemplates the face of Venice; in a "Psalm" of Marcello's, one hears her soul speak. The one shows her living in the fair light of her soft skies, the other sings the joy that she has in so living.

Let us recall certain lines of Taine's on the Venetian landscapes, — the light and rainbow tints of her lagoons, the new world which she opens to the eyes: "A reflecting, softening, never-ending brilliance of blending tints. . . . One can pass hours watching these gradations and shades, this undulating, voluptuous, external life."<sup>1</sup> It is not, however, this picturesque Venice, appealing with such fascination to the senses, which one finds in Marcello's firm, free music; but another Venice, whose genius Taine comprehended no less completely; he felt "her joyous strength, full and abandoned, but always noble, which ever strikes forth boldly in the sea of prosperity and happiness."<sup>2</sup> It is by right of this same nobility and abandon, and this air of full happiness and prosperity, in an equal strength and by reason of just such a joy, that the master of the "Psalms" is a true Venetian,

<sup>1</sup> Voyage en Italie: Taine.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

—in the same robust passionate spirit which makes the painter of the “Assumption” so essentially a child of the Queen of the Adriatic. “*I cieli immensi narrano*” is Titian’s “Assumption” in music; Taine has unconsciously described the “Psalms,” in his praise of the painting: “An intense reddish-purple tint pervades the entire picture; a vigorous colour which seems to emit a healthy energy throughout the whole. Below are the apostles, above them, in the air, rises the Virgin in an ardent glory; she is of the race of the apostles, healthy and strong, without exaltation or mystic smile, proudly arrayed in her red robe, over which is draped a blue mantle. The stuff falls in a thousand folds about the curves of the beautiful figure, her attitude is athletic, her expression grave. There is no suggestion of softness or languor, but a something that is virile in her grace. . . . A lovely pagan ideal, of serious strength and brilliant youth; in this painting Venice reaches the centre and perhaps the summit of her art.”

All is as true of the canticle as of the painting if we except the one word “pagan,” which certainly cannot apply to the musical work, nor—if we may venture the criticism—to Titian’s masterpiece.

Yes — from the music there emanates the same healthful energy ; in the centre of the “ Psalm,” above the accompanying harmony, proudly rises the melody, robust, and, if not without exaltation, at least with no mystic smile. Gravity of expression, virile grace, serious strength, brilliant youth ; no charm of the graceful creature of colour and tone is wanting in the lovely creation of sound, as she rises with a movement more impetuous than that of tone and in a more ardent glory than that of colour.

And as to the red robe enveloped in blue, — the two tones so boldly united, — would it be impossible to find their counterpart in the modulation from the tonic to the dominant, the strong opposition and the affinity, which is at once elementary and vigorous ? The two masterpieces of one country, they resemble one another not only in inspiration but in execution, — I had almost said in technique. They betray the touch of a common hand, *il vero colpo veneziano*. It has been said that Raphael’s virgins, could they sing, would attune their thoughts to the melodies of Mozart ! — If the apostles of Titian should burst into song, they would chant the “ Psalms ” of Marcello.

PERGOLESE.

TO M. PAGLIARA, LIBRARIAN OF THE NAPLES  
CONSERVATORY.





## PERGOLESE.

THE story of Pergolese's life and blighted genius is brief and sad, and few are the words necessary to tell of his life-work. *Giovane e moribondo*, is the inscription over his grave in Pozzuoli; "young and dying" — it is thus that we see, pity, and love him. His two master-pieces, equally great and yet so unlike, "La Serva Padrona," and the "Stabat Mater," are each pervaded with a subtle charm, the one of his youth, the other of his death. He was not, like Marcello, great, rich, and happy, and never under the Neapolitan skies did twenty such years die out in greater misery and sadness.

After Marcello in his strength, Pergolese personifies a furtive, evanescent grace. Here — after the grandiose Master — we meet the charming Lover of Italian melody; the dainty flower which sprang up at the foot of the tree, and in its shadow, — withering, alas! before the night. So though we know little of him as a man, let us not seek for more; and, above all, let us mingle nothing dry nor abstract with

his memory, redolent of poetry. Let us eliminate everything that would seem to weigh heavily on this simple, almost frail genius, saying with Perdican before another flower: "I care nothing for all that; I only know how sweet is its perfume, and it is enough."

## I.

It is as a youth of sixteen that we see Pergolese entering Naples for the first time. He comes from Jesi, the little pontifical village of his birth, where his grandfather lived by the trade of shoemaking and his father as a surveyor (*agrimensore*). The slender, frail boy wears the red soutane and blue cloak of the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo*, for upon the recommendation of the "lord" of his country home, he has been admitted into the conservatory of the *Poveri*. There Naples gathered her children, even the most abandoned and unhappy among them, educating them gratuitously, and training them to different trades according to the diversity of their tastes. With instruction in religion and morality the children received likewise a good musical education; thus everywhere — at Naples as at Venice — liberal, melody-loving Italy gave to her sons, with a little of her

gold, a little too of her genius, and each asylum for the unfortunate became a school for the development of the beautiful.

Such a pupil as Pergolese soon astonished his teachers, especially his master on the violin ; like the singer in the fable he performed trills and roulades which were the marvel of all who heard them. From Greco, Durante, Feo, one after the other, he learned harmony and counter-point ; but melody was taught him by no one. Often he and his fellow-pupils would wander out into the lovely Campagna, and wend their way — sorry little monks that they were — like a scarlet and blue ribbon along the slopes of the Neapolitan hills. As they returned towards evening, along Posilipo, they would listen to the fishermen's songs as they turned the promontory nearing home, or to the country people singing along the road. Songs of the land and songs of the sea, — the child heard them all : madly joyous or sad as death, as they are still to-day, but ever sincere and true to life, perchance it was from them that there passed into Pergolese's work — into his "*Serva Padrona*" or the "*Tre giorni son che Nina*" — that indescribable touch of the world and of people, that accent of life and truth.

But much as he loved the songs of the people,

the music of the Church was no less dear to him. When the Carnival days arrived, the little *Povero di Gesù Christo* found a grave pleasure in turning the hours to a holy use. Leaving the city to its folly, he would go into the Oratorian chapel near his conservatory and play upon the organ the music which San Filippo had ordained to be alternated with the homilies of the service. Thus it was that the boy used those hours of pleasure, those "forty hours," which the world profaned, for a season of piety and prayer.

His first work was an oratorio, "San Guglielmo d'Aquitania," given at the convent of Sant' Agnello Maggiore in 1731, and exciting much admiration. He was then twenty-one, and had but five more years to live, — years teeming with genius and misfortune. Two or three unfortunate operas turned him for a time from dramatic music, and, resolved to abandon it altogether, he wrote thirty trios for two violins and a bass viol, besides several masses, vespers, and cantatas. But soon the charm of the drama drew him back; and "La Serva Padrona," brought out, with great acclamations, on the little stage of San Bartolomeo, was the young *maestro's* glory. And yet, two years later, at Rome, his "Olympiade" was most unjustly hissed; while Duni's "Neroni" was still more

unjustly applauded. It is said that while the poor young composer was seated at a harpsichord conducting this unfortunate performance of his "*Olympiade*," some one from the excited, jeering crowd threw an orange directly in his face. Filled with grief and shame, the disappointed man fled to Loreto, where he had been appointed chapel-master, carrying there far more than an insulted forehead, — a heart wounded to death. This twenty-fifth year, the last of his life, had been fatal to his love as well as to his popularity. One day, so the best informed of Pergolese's biographers tells the story, Maria Spinelli, a young girl of noble family, was surprised in her room by the entrance of her three brothers. Drawing their swords, they swore that if, in three days' time, she had not chosen for her husband a man of equal birth with herself, by that steel which they clasped, Pergolese, the musician, should perish; for it was known that he loved her, and that she accepted his love.

At the end of three days the brothers returned to find that their sister had obeyed them; she had indeed affianced herself — but to God — and had hidden her love and her sorrow beneath the veil of the "*Povere Donne*."

One year later, on March 11, 1735, the bell

of the convent of Santa Clara tolled the knell of the dying ; and in the chapel Pergolese himself, with the shadow of death already on his brow, directed the funeral service of his beloved dead.<sup>1</sup>

From Loreto, where he had begun his "Stabat Mater," the young *maestro* returned to Naples to finish the work and to die ; for consumption had fixed its fatal grasp upon his vitality. He was advised to try a milder air, and the Franciscans of Pozzuoli received into their monastery him who was destined to be, till the end, a "Povero di Gesù Christo." But their kindness could not heal him ; racked with coughing and trembling with fever, he weakened and faded away, still writing upon the "Stabat," which some pious men had ordered and had, indeed, paid for in advance (ten ducats !). One day when Feo, Pergolese's former master, begged him to suspend his work, the dying man murmured : "Alas ! I have no time to lose, if I would keep my promise. A sad, miserable work is this ! God knows how posterity will judge of it ; they have paid me ten

<sup>1</sup> Concerning this incident, and others touching upon the life and work of Pergolese, see, "La Scuola musicale di Napoli e i suoi Conservatorii, con uno sguardo sulla storia della musica in Italia," by Francesco Florimo. Naples, 1882.

ducats for it, and I verily believe that it is not worth ten *baiocchi* !” He at least had the consolation of living to finish his “*Stabat*.” We are told that it was with hands already chilled with the last agony, that he wrote for the violin, which he loved so well, the beautiful *ritornello*, “*Quando Corpus Morietur*,” and then died. He was buried quietly in the cathedral of Pozzuoli, where, on his tomb, one would love to see inscribed Voltaire’s parting words to that other artist, Vauvenargues, dying in the very flower of his youth and charm. “Farewell, beautiful soul and beautiful genius.”

## II.

Pergolese’s work divides itself naturally under his two masterpieces, “*La Serva Padrona*” and the “*Stabat Mater*.” Each are products of the same genius ; but the second comes from a changed soul, — one which has been awakened, stirred, and softened by suffering. Let us endeavour to watch that development ; let us go as did Pergolese, or rather let us rise with him, from irony to piety, from laughter to prayer, from this earth to heaven.

“*La Serva Padrona*” possesses a twofold external beauty, — in the clear movement of its

spirit, the vivacity and transport of an insolent, triumphant youth, and secondly, — and more deeply, — in its moral insight into character. It is a marvel at once of dramatic music and of musical psychology. The French *opéra-comique* and the Italian *opera-bouffa* were born from this little intermezzo,<sup>1</sup> as though from a germ or drop of life ; and both of the more modern ideas having lost, perhaps, in depth what they may have gained in extent, are but dilutions, as it were, of the work which was so essentially Pergolese's. The "Barbiere di Seviglia" seems superficial after the "Serva Padrona," the "Dame Blanche," sentimental, and the "Domino Noir" savours too much of the vaudeville. Nowhere can one find a strength so concentrated and intact as in this little operetta ; a strength somewhat primitive and rude, — at times even harsh, — which the melody of France and of Italy was not long in softening away.

In his sinewy acumen, the Pergolese of "La Serva Padrona" resembles Marcello, for if he had not the great Venetian's breadth and magnificence, yet he possessed the same firmness, the same melody of right angles and keen edges ;

<sup>1</sup> The Italians called any lighter work, given between the acts of a more serious opera, an "Intermezzo," "per sollevare l'uditorio dalla soverchia attenzione."



and this melodic breadth of physique lends a rigorous vitality to the entire work. It is charming, exquisite, but it leaves a bitter after-taste; and if not the creation of a moralist, it at least comes from an ironical psychologist, who knows no indulgence. Before raising her to the divine heights of the "Stabat," how did Pergolese debase woman! It would be impossible to ridicule with more severity, not to say scorn, the pitiable adventures of ancillary love. "La Serva Padrona" represents in music one of the most vulgar forms of the eternal struggle, the meeting together of man and woman; terrible—or ridiculous, it may be, when from a *duo* it becomes a duel. The duel here is between amorous old age and impudent youth. Uberto may take his place in the group of classic graybeards, beside Arnolfo and Bartolo; no, not beside them,—beneath, rather, for his soul is more mediocre than theirs. As for Serpina, beside her Rosine is an *ingénue*; she is not the sly ward, nor the roguish *soubrette*, but in the full sense of the word she is a servant. Still more, she is the woman, the enemy; not the tragic enemy, that "she-ape of the Land of Nod," as Alexandre Dumas, *fi*ls, has called her, but the charming and melodious enemy, the immortal siren, who does not, of

necessity, dwell in the blue waves, but at times is to be found within-doors, — nay, even in the kitchen, in “simple petticoat and flat shoes.”

There is a suggestion of harshness at every page of the “*Serva Padrona* ;” constantly one is wounded by some passing prick. It is impossible for the ear not to catch the asperity of Uberto’s first air, for instance ; and as for *Serpina*’s rôle, it is a marvel of imperious irony, made up of incisive rhythms, stinging notes, and short irritated and irritating phrases. It is nothing less than a swarm of wasps, winged and armed, this swarm of melodies ; and melodies alone, for the melodic genius was never more sufficient unto itself than here, where all expression, all truth, all beauty, lies in the song. Scarcely one accompaniment, and consequently but little harmony, is to be found in the work ; the first violin is constantly in unison with the voice, and the basses serve but to mark the measure. Pergolese’s melody has followed the example of *Serpina* : it has clothed itself in short skirts for the sake of more agility.

The great page of “*La Serva Padrona*,” the masterpiece of the masterpiece, beyond all doubt, is the famous *duo* which was the admiration of Rousseau. It is just here that musical comedy attains its centre and summit, — at the

decisive pass in the duel between the two most prominent characters. Serpina first makes the attack, and she strikes straight from the shoulder. "You will marry me; I see it in your little knavish, thievish, malicious eyes; your lips, indeed, said 'no,' but your eyes tell me 'yes.'"<sup>1</sup> Bold even to impudence, the phrase is musical as well as expressive; it sings and talks at the same time, detaching the words for better effect: "furbi" — "ladri" — "malignetti;" and while it glides over the "no, no, no," marking the "si, si, si," on the contrary, with brilliant tones. Uberto's retort, "Signorina, v'ingannate!" — "You deceive yourself, my young lady," — imitates the first attack, the dominant responding to the tonic, in the classic modulation by which the symmetry of the *duo* is established. Then a second phrase deduces itself from the first, no longer imperious, but coquettish and ready to parry any thrust, its syncopated notes emphasised with an ingenious brilliancy, and then pining away in a *rallentando*. Uberto no longer offers any retort to Serpina's enticements and the young insolence of

<sup>1</sup> Lo conosco a quegli occhietti  
Furbi, ladri, malignetti,  
Che, sebben voi dite no,  
Pur accennano di sì.

her victory, other than by scolding along in a sort of senile grumbling, which is both ashamed and pleased. Thus the *duo* runs on, always melodious and rhythmical, almost symphonic at times, to the end ; in spite of very free bits and exquisite incidents, the alternating clash of the "no" and the "si" giving a dry precision and something of the logical rigour of a discussion.

Half a century later another duet was to be sung, whose "si" and "no" would answer one another in much the same way, — a duet between another master and a *soubrette*, in the place of Serpina. Yet quite another thing is the "Figaro" *duo* between the count and Suzanne. Once more the woman commands and triumphs in mockery and laughter, and again is the man her dupe, but with what a difference ! In place of the vivacity of "La Serva Padrona," notice the languor of "Perche, crudel, fin'ora Farmi languir cosi !" "Languir" is, indeed, the word that indicates the sentimental diapason of the entire passage. Apropos of "Figaro," M. Cherbuliez once spoke of the "enchantments of a music which melts the heart," — words eminently appropriate here, for assuredly something had "melted" in music between Pergolese and Mozart. Do not imagine that this is transporting into music ideas which should pertain

only to things literary. The chief points of difference between the Italian interlude and Beaumarchais' comedy are, in fact, essentially literary, lying between the two subjects and the two situations. However "sharp," as Figaro said, Suzanne may be, she is less highly coloured than Serpina, and has something about her less hard and aggressive: she, too, would wed, but not her master; and, more than that, this master, the handsome Almaviva, is not a "bonhomme Cassandre;" and this evening, Suzanne, under the big chestnut-trees, is not so much to be pitied as is Serpina in her graybeard's alcove.

The words, of course, tell us all this, and yet, in their way, the notes speak the same story. If we listen to them alone, forgetting, if possible, the stage and the actors, — even the words, — we shall hear the same idea, less precise, it may be, but more profound. We shall hear that it is not only with two *duos* and two comedies that we are occupied, but with two different conditions of the senses; recognising that over music there has passed a mild breath and a divine sweetness, which has insinuated itself into the mysterious soul of sound to renew and soften it.

## III.

But we may find the foretaste of this new sweetness even in Pergolese himself. Among his works there are three *canzones*, in which one seems to feel the melody of "La Serva Padrona" unbending in a new suppleness. The first words are: "This afflicted, grieved soul could endure the most cruel pain, if she might caress even the hope of consolation. But alas! all hope fails; there is no way nor place in which to hope longer."<sup>1</sup> And the second *canzone* reads: "If thou lovest me, gentle shepherd, and if thou sighest for me alone, I pity thy martyrdom and love thy love; but if thou dost think that I should love thee alone in return, — oh, then, dear shepherd, thou art in danger of a sad mistake. Behold, the beautiful red rose which Sylvia plucks to-day, to-morrow she will cast aside for the tiny thorn upon it! But as for me, I shall never follow the world's advice; because

<sup>1</sup> Ogni pena più spietata  
Soffriria quest' alma afflitta,  
Desolata,  
Se godesse la speranza  
Di potersi consolar.  
Ma, ohime! cade ogni speme,  
Non c'è luogo, non c'è vita,  
Non c'è modo di sperar!

I love the lily, I shall not therefore disdain all other flowers!"<sup>1</sup>

The two romances have the same intrinsic charm. Over his melody Pergolese seems to have spread a shadow; the style has changed, and a lingering minor succeeds to the brilliant major. But this is not all: the melody, so direct and firm in "La Serva Padrona," undulates and bends itself to adornment. But a light and melancholy decoration verily, but still an adornment. Thus attired, though very natural still, dreamy but smiling, it is doubly delicious. Notice especially

<sup>1</sup> Se tu m'ami, se tu sospiri  
Sol per me, gentil pastor,  
Ho dolor dei tuoi martiri,  
Ho diletto del tuo amor.  
Ma se pensi che soletto  
Io ti debbo riamar,  
Pastorello, sei soggetto,  
Facilmente a t' ingannar.  
  
Bella rosa porporina  
Oggi Silvia sceglierà,  
Colla scusa della spina  
Doman poi la sprezzerà;  
Ma degli uomini il consiglio  
Io per me non seguìro:  
Non perche mi piace il giglio,  
Gli altri fiori sprezzero.

These two *romanzas* are found in an admirable collection of old Italian airs: "Arie antiche, raccolte per cura di A. Parisotti;" Ricordi, Milan.

the declaration or warning to the shepherd lad. This bit stands, in the collection from which I took it, side by side with an air of Serpina's; but how separated from it in sentiment! What a distance is there between the souls of these two women, and how far one travels from that rudeness to this compassion! There, all is brought out in high relief; here, all is veiled and nothing clashes. The unknown singer will betray the *pastorello*; she accuses herself of it quite frankly, but she excuses herself too, and there is such a pretty regret in the feminine apology, such a charming chagrin in the avowal of a fragility which is powerless to remain faithful, that, with an indulgent sorrow, one cannot but smile and pardon.

Pergolese possessed grace not only in melancholy, but even in grief. He has left us one of those songs which seem to contain within themselves the beauty of all the centuries, — one of those compositions which would suffice to bear witness to the glory of an art, if it alone remained to speak. We should still know all of the sadness which had once pulsed through Italian melody if nothing remained to us but “Tre giorni son che Nina,” even as we should know its joy through Marcello's “I cieli immensi narrano.”

“For three days has Nina been sleeping on



her couch. Fifes, cymbals, timbals, awake my Ninetta, that she sleep no more.”<sup>1</sup>

This is all: three lines of poetry, eight lines of music, — and yet a masterpiece! I know of no other so brief or so purely melodious. Nowhere does Italian melody offer anything less harmonised, — anything more linear and bare, — but the three lines are lovely in design, and the contours of the melodic nudity are divinely fair. We even find here, as in all perfect beauty, reason and logic, and we needs must admire even the syntax of this musical phrase. Though so short, with what genius is it composed, and with what smooth symmetry does it maintain its equilibrium! There is scarcely a modulation in it, for though it slips for a moment into the relative major, the melody passes quickly through simple chords without pause. It is scarcely necessary to point out the lyrical force of the apostrophe, “Pifferi, cembali, timpani;” and how evidently the second motive deduces itself from the first and leads back to it!

What man, indeed, who has heard — if only once — the heart-rending ascent of the scale, “Svegliate mi Ninetta,” does not bear in all after

<sup>1</sup> Tre giorni son che Nina a letto se ne sta,  
Pifferi, cembali, timpani,  
Svegliate mi Ninetta, accio non dorma più.

time a furrow of sadness, cut, as it were, into his soul? A mystery hovers over this wonderful music, a mystery of love and mourning. Who shall say what she was, — this lost Ninetta, — or by what deserted balcony, beneath what window, closed for ever, this sad serenade was sung? For its accents suggest a funeral dirge; it was not a sleeper that the music was to waken — but the dead. As we listen, our thoughts turn back to all maidens of poetry and history who have lain pale in death; above all, to that young maid of the Evangel whom Jesus raised. For her, too, had “the musicians and the flute-players already come,” — *Pifferi, cembali*. Such is the ardour of the appeal that so great sorrow seems almost to demand another miracle. Perchance before some well-beloved lifeless form, this song will rise in your heart, with the wild hope, almost the expectation, of beholding the loved one arise before your enraptured eyes.

#### IV.

Pergolese’s “Stabat Mater” is no more beautiful than the sad little serenade, which lingers in our memories. The master sang with such nobility and tender purity of human suffering

that his genius can rise no higher in singing the sorrows of the Divine One.

It will not be without interest, in closing these three studies upon Italian music, to consider a subject which the genius of Italy has treated at four different times during the period including the thirteenth and the nineteenth centuries, after the form and peculiar ideal of each epoch. The liturgical "Stabat," the "Stabat" of Palestrina, and those of Pergolese and Rossini, — the cycle of these four works completes an evolution and follows the course of the Italian genius.

The "Stabat Mater" of the liturgy has been ascribed to various authors, — St. Gregory the Great, St. Bonaventura, Innocent III., and the Blessed Jacopone di Todi; but, according to the most received and best defended opinion of the day, it seems, without doubt, to be the work of Jacopone, the fiery and yet tender Franciscan, the writer of pitiless pamphlets and delicious poetry.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Concerning the ascription of the "Stabat" to Jacopone di Todi, see: —

B. Hauréau, of the Institute, "Notices et extraits de quelques manuscrits latins," vol. vi. p. 188; analysis of manuscript, 333, year 1893.

Ulysse Chevalier, "Poésie liturgique traditionnelle." Desclée, Tournai, 1894, p. 277; — "Poésie liturgique du moyen âge." Lyon, Emmanuel Vitte, 1892.

Concerning Fra Jacopone's peculiar character, con-

At all events, no copy of the "Stabat" is extant prior to the thirteenth century; and whether or no Jacopone was the first to sing it, certain it is that this subject of the Compassion of the Virgin haunted the air which he breathed. Again and again we find it in those song-dialogues which were so often given by religious brotherhoods. The following is the substance of a Laud, written for the Passion season, which has been translated by M. Gebhart.<sup>1</sup> The Virgin, Christ, the people, even the poet himself take part: "Oh, Pilate, torment not my son! I can prove to thee that he is wrongfully accused. — Crucify him! Crucify him! — the man who calls himself our king! According to our law he has sinned against the Senate. — Woman, look! They have taken him by the arm, have stretched him on the cross, have nailed his hands. — Mother, why hast thou come? Thy tears inflict upon me a mortal blow! — My son, I was called. My child, my father and husband, my child, who has thus despoiled thee? My son, thou hast given up the soul — my son all white and red, and so thou hast left me — my son white

sult: A.-F. Ozanam, "Les Poètes franciscains en Italie au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," Paris, Lecoffre; M. Émile Gebhart, "L'Italie mystique," Paris, Hachette.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*

and fair—my son with lovely face — my son, why have they thus so cruelly outraged thee? Oh, John, son just given me, thy brother is dead, and that knife which was prophesied has, with one blow, killed the mother and the child.”

This is the dramatic form of which the Latin sequence was the lyrical. But as to the music of the “*Stabat*,” was it, as well as the text, the work of Jacopone? Without being able to prove it, we may be permitted the supposition, as the old “*Brother*” was a musician and a composer of music. Yet this work may have been adapted by him to the words of the “*Stabat*” from some melody popular at that time in Italy. We all know the liturgical “*Stabat* ;” but to know it at its best, one must hear it sung by nuns’ voices at Notre Dame, during some Good Friday service, while to its solemn music the holy relics are borne through the great nave of the church,—the thorns, the nail, even the sacred wood against which the sorrowing Brother leaned. “The Roman Catholic liturgy,” writes Ozanam,<sup>1</sup> “contains nothing more touching than this said plaint, whose monotonous strophes fall like tears ; so gentle are they that one recognises in them a grief which is divine and which angels must

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*

console, and so simple in the popular Latin that women and children understand it, half by reason of the simplicity of the words, and half through the music, which reaches the very heart." Ozanam is right: the "Stabat" is simple, sad, and gentle; perhaps even a little too gentle,—the homage of pious respect rather than of stricken tenderness. This psalmody, all in the major key, lacks that touch of pathos, the tender minor note which makes its contemporary, the "Dies Iræ," so tragic. The two resemble each other in their freedom from the laws of prosody, as well as in their rhythm and the long isochronous notation. But while the melody of the "Dies Iræ" begins by descending, that of the "Stabat," on the contrary, rises as though to climb to the very foot of the cross; and, finally, the most pronounced peculiarity of the liturgical "Stabat," and the one by which it is most distinguished from the others, is its division into strophes of the same length and value. This gives a remarkable character of unity, something even of the supernatural, and of superiority to the mobility of our human grief,—a suggestion of sorrow eternally inconsolable.

Palestrina's "Stabat" is no less great than the liturgical work, but its beauty lies along other lines,—those of continuity rather than of

repetition. Without pause, or any retracing of its course, it develops all the beauty of that art which makes Palestrina's the religious music *par excellence*, — the music of the Divine.

For myself, I confess that after the enchantment of that melody, grand above all other, — the music of Marcello and Pergolese, — I turn with pleasure for a moment to the old master of harmony, and taste the infinite sweetness of unaltered consonances. Palestrina's "Stabat" is written for two choirs of four voices each, which are sometimes alternated, sometimes united. From the first verse, they answer one another in chords upon chords, — always perfect, and linked together in a succession that seems to raise itself to the very Infinite. The harmonies float long in the air, and descend slowly, like light veiled mists and shadows. They create about them an atmosphere, a refuge in which the soul in the secure repose of solitude wraps itself in tender melancholy. Even while this melancholy and tenderness is sustained to the end, Palestrina has interrupted such a monotony as that of the liturgical "Stabat" by introducing into the long plaint every variety and liberty even, which vocal polyphony permits.

We have seen, in earlier pages, that the work of the old Roman master was inward and con-

templative above all else ; and this characteristic should be emphasised in the light of this last masterpiece of the soul, — secret meditation. Without even being carried outside itself, without quitting the inviolate domain of prayer and self-contemplation, this music attains and is sensitive to the slightest movements and the most delicate shades. Let us open it at the tiercet : —

“Vidit suum dulcem natum  
Moriendo desolatum,  
Dum emisit spiritum.”

We find an explosion that is almost dramatic on the last words, the two choirs interchanging chords which are rung out with full voice and uniting at the finale in a brilliant major.

Again, read, —

“Eia ! Mater, fons amoris,  
Me sentire vim doloris  
Fac ut tecum lugeam.”

“O Mother ! source of love, let me feel the depth of thy sorrow ; let me weep with thee !” What do we find here ? — A slight alteration in rhyme from four time to three, and the breadth of the effect destroyed thereby, the movement suddenly slackened, and the burst of song brusquely stifled. Neither did the genius of Palestrina falter in the delicious passage from



the recitative to the prayer. The gaze leaves the cross and lowers itself to the ground; the soul falls back and draws within herself in an adoring humility and a mystical shame. She is applying to herself the terrible lesson, appropriating the merits of the divine blood and of the divine tears. This tiercet — the mysterious after the tragic — is as it were the practical conclusion to the sacred spectacle; it shows the moral birth of faith; and, last mark as it is of a religious work that had been wrought in those old days within the soul, it is so profound and so fine that beside it all others seem but superficial and transient.

All others but those of Pergolese. In an occasional verse of the one or the other “Stabat” we find the same perfection realised through the two different kinds of procedure, — polyphony and melody. Here, at last, in the work of the young *maestro* of Naples, is the ideal melody, glorious in the twofold beauty of grace and truth, — Italy’s lovely creation, which, alas! she herself was to mar so soon. While listening to the first strophe of Pergolese’s “Stabat,” recall the “Psalms” of Marcello, and you will feel that if the Venetian master’s melody lacked in feeling and love, henceforth nothing is wanting. Melody is not only softened, but it is

prolonged, and its breath is become at the same time more lasting and more sweet. In what work of Marcello's do we find such linear flexibility, such pliable contours, and so lingering a grace? It is true that Pergolese's phrase dares yet to go only from the tonic to the dominant, following the primitive modulation, and, as it were, the elementary reasoning of musical logic, but following it in untrammelled freedom, and arriving at the same goal as does Marcello's phrase, but by a pleasanter path, along which one begins to linger now and again among the wayside flowers. Melody may not yet be ornamented, but she is no longer nude; and with a thoughtful touch that is a refinement of tender respect, Pergolese has confided the most feminine of sacred songs to two female voices; the masculine notes seem to him too rough to sympathise with maternal grief.

But the Neapolitan's "*Stabat*" marks not only a point of arrival, but one of departure likewise, in the history of Italian music. For though we here see melody in the full perfection of her being, we seem also to foresee her inclination towards that fatal abyss into which she is one day to fall.

One or another strophe, the "*Quæ mœrèbat*" or the "*Inflammat*," contain the germ of an evil,

the principle of a decadence, which, though brilliant and even sumptuous, is nevertheless a decadence. "*Quæ mærebat et dolebat*, — she who suffers and is afflicted." By what strange contradiction have these sorrowful words provoked in Pergolese and even in Palestrina this movement of transport. For Palestrina himself was the first to invest them not only with force, but with actual cheerfulness! He marked them with a brilliant syncopation in two or three measure, which heralds, two centuries in advance, the syncopation of Pergolese's equally brilliant air. It is true that the timbre of the contralto voice, for which this melody is written, lends it some gravity; but with the latter, and in spite of it, what an accent of festivity we catch! What a triumphal re-entrance of joy into the religious art of the Italian soul, — that recovered soul, hungering for joy, and incapable of the constraint of too prolonged a sorrow! It is beauty that we must admire here, — beauty in and of itself, and no longer the handmaid of faith. Such a strophe may suggest the concert-room, even the salon, but no longer the church. It was in a salon that I heard for the first time the "*Stabat*" of Pergolese, and his strains seemed in no wise out of accord with their surroundings. I was one of an attentive, thoughtful

group, for we were gathered together during the Lenten season. The audience was well chosen, but perhaps a trifle worldly; the two singers — contraltos — were in subdued toilet, and yet nevertheless distinctly *en toilette*; and still, in spite of artists and accessories, the work seemed in perfect harmony with its surroundings.

Let us turn now, if but for a moment, from Pergolese's "Stabat" to that of Rossini, to find there this strangely inappropriate germ of felicity in an alarming state of fruition. Not here, as in Pergolese, do we now and then find touches of what strikes us as unseemly gayety, but, rather, one continued burst of brilliancy, which often wounds in its intensity. It is a work which resounds with joy from beginning to end, characterised by an utter absence of piety, all sorrow disowned, prayer turned into an operatic aria, and the cross hidden in flowers. Corruption, we cry, and decadence! But are we right? Is this not, after all, the necessary termination of the evolution of the Italian soul carried beyond itself, — the exaltation of the genius of a race which submitted to an idea, in place of conquering it? Is it not ever thus? For which are the greater artists, — those who efface themselves, or those who are self-assertive? And, elsewhere than in Italy, do you not

remember with what a flourish of colour, and with what triumphal symphonies, the Son of that sorrowing Mother expires on the canvas of the Flemish Rubens? Think of a certain “*Montée au calvaire*” in the Brussels Museum. “The Christ is dying of fatigue, while St. Veronica wipes his brow; the weeping Virgin throws her arms out towards Him, and Simon the Cyrenian upholds the cross; and yet, in spite of that symbol of infamy, of the weeping women and the sinking Victim, whose panting mouth, humid temples, and wild eyes stir the pity, — notwithstanding the fear and cries, with death imminent, — it is quite clear to him who reads aright that the agony of the cross is eclipsed by all this equestrian pomp; by these floating banners and the grandeur of that armed centurion, in whose features we recognise those of Rubens himself, as he turns in his saddle with a graceful gesture, — the whole display giving a most evident idea of triumph to the scene. Such is the curious logic of the master’s brilliant mind. One would say that the picture is conceived in quite the wrong sense, that it is melodramatic, almost theatrical, and lacking in majesty, beauty, and august dignity. But it is just this element of the picturesque which might have been the ruin of the painting that has, in reality, saved it.

The fancy seizes gladly upon the artist's conception, for it is a ray of true feeling, which ennobles the scene. Something like a burst of eloquence elevates the style ; and an inexpressible rapture of happiness, an inspired transport, makes of this painting just what it should be, — the picture of a death which is but transient, the depicting of an apotheosis." <sup>1</sup>

Let us endeavour to listen to certain pages of Italian music — to the "*Quæ mœrebat*" of Rossini, for instance, or even that of Pergolese—in the same spirit with which Fromentin read Rubens' picture. Let us, too, extract what there is of good from the inspired rapture, from these dashes of eloquence and feeling, and this melody which is the saviour of what it might have ruined, and which changes the stroke of the dread angel into an apotheosis. And, after all, is this glad genius of Italy so greatly in the wrong? What is it that was accomplished on Calvary? A mystery of horror, indeed, but of benediction also ; a crime, but an unutterable good to the world. From a passing death there was born there on Calvary life eternal ; and it may be that Pergolese, lighting his sad subject with some rays of joy, has but made it the better

<sup>1</sup> "*Les Maîtres d'Autrefois*," by Eugène Fromentin.

understood, and has revealed its more profound depths.

Above all, let us not envy the dying boy this furtive smile, — a ray of light which was soon to vanish. One day, — and in the Naples of Pergolese how beautiful a day may be ! — perhaps, as he looked out from his monastery asylum over the skies and waters which were so pure and so blue, he thought himself healed and believed that he would live. Then, his heart beating with hope, he would sing out the glad illusion in rapturous melody, forgetful of the sad words of his text ; and surely the Mother of Sorrow would pardon this one moment of forgetfulness.

For truly this moment was but short-lived. “When Hope, too slow in coming, began to soothe his pain, Death was already at the door.”<sup>1</sup> The last tiercet of his “Stabat” is sublime. “Quando corpus morietur, — When the body dies, may the soul enter the glory of Paradise.” I know of no other page of music where death is thus accepted, even asked from Heaven, as it were. This is even more beautiful, more divine than the “Eia ! Mater” of Palestrina ; the turning of the composer’s thought to himself is more direct and more sorrowful. Poor boy, who sang at the same time the Divine Agony — and his

<sup>1</sup> Vauvenargues.

own! "Quando corpus morietur;" what poignant sweetness lies in this final strophe! The words seem to pray, vaguely and from a distance, for these our bodies, which must one day die; but the notes pray with what an immediate personal petition! For one poor body, which, alas! must die to-day!

Here do we take leave of Italian melody. After having perceived, or rather suspected, its presence in the polyphony of Palestrina, we have followed its development and growth as it acquired in Marcello its strength, and its grace in Pergolese, — bearing, as it were, in one season flowers and fruit. However illustrious are the masters which follow, they are no greater than the composer of the "Psalms," or the Pergolese of the "Stabat;" a song by Mozart, and Mozart alone, may surpass the beauty of Pergolese's melody, and Mozart was not an Italian, or at best but half a one. Twice — at the close of the sixteenth century and in the middle of the eighteenth — did the Italian genius of music realise its ideal, carrying to their perfection two forms of art: vocal polyphony and melody. A third ideal was to be born, but not of the Italian soul. It was elaborated upon the key-board<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The first part of the "Well-tempered Clavichord," dated 1722.



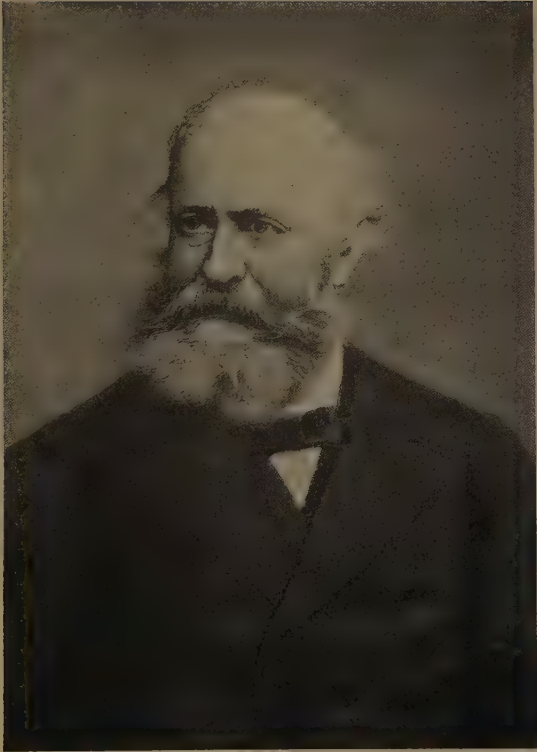
of Sebastian Bach, more than ten years before the death of Pergolese and that of Marcello : beneath his fingers it is only the fugue ; but let Haydn come, and it shall be the symphony, and through the symphony music was once again revived.



CHARLES GOUNOD.

TO MADAME GOUNOD.





GOUNOD.



## CHARLES GOUNOD.

Liebe sei vor allen Dingen  
Unser Thema, wenn wir singen.

GOETHE.

BEFORE beginning our study of Charles Gounod, I would extend a grateful acknowledgment to those faithful guardians of his memory, who, fulfilling their trust with such an entire absence of miserliness or jealousy, have kindly confided manuscripts, notes, letters,—all, in fact, which remained of the master,<sup>1</sup>—to hands which, indeed, they knew would touch their treasures only with reverence. It is through their kindness that I have been enabled to come closer than during his lifetime, even, to their friend and mine. While turning the leaves of his manuscripts and letters, I have seemed to hear him, almost to see him once more in that study, so dark and silent to-day,

<sup>1</sup> Since the writing of these papers the "Revue de Paris" has published, under the title of "Mémoires d'un Artiste," fragments of M. Gounod's autobiography. We shall occasionally refer the reader to these "Mémoires," which close with the year 1859.

but which was once harmonious with his songs and illumined with that glance which justified the poet's words: "It is our eye which tells how much of the man there is within us."<sup>1</sup> I seemed to be with him again, in his own home and once more; and for the last time, he was, in his death, what he had always been in life, my master and my friend, *lo mio maestro e lo mio autore*. He seemed to live his life again, and his work, in the order of his years. May this study, which I approach with a feeling of melancholy and of apprehension, show forth in some faint way the strength and beauty of that life and work. In a critical work, and especially in a musical criticism, there is ever an element of sadness in the passing from emotion to analysis. One ceases the eager poring over what the dead has left us only to begin writing with fearful heart. The voices are indeed dead, and we may speak only of what was once so sweet to hear; but courage fails us and words falter before the memory of those mysterious sounds.

<sup>1</sup> Victor Hugo.



## I.

“ His character is open and gay, quick almost to petulance, — rather restless, but excellent. Everything considered, he is an amiable child, who will give satisfaction to his masters, and who will become the consolation and pride of his mother.” This is the earliest portrait left us of Gounod. It is dated May 30, 1829, and signed by Hallays-Dabot, director of the boarding-school which the young scholar of eleven years was about to leave for entrance into the “ Lycée St.-Louis ” of Paris.

A few months later, one evening of St.-Charlemagne's Day, the little fellow, after a long two hours' wait in the January snow, made his way for the first time into the “ Théâtre-Italien.” It was at this performance of “ Otello ” that music seems to have first revealed herself to the future master. At what page of the work ? One loves to think that it was at that lovely and immortal plaint which Gounod was one day to recall, as he invoked, in memory of Rossini, the “ sad, sweet gondolier of Desdemona.”

That the love of music developed rapidly in the ardent heart of the young collegian, we see by portions of a letter which the child — for he

was but thirteen — wrote to his mother, declaring his new-found love : —

“ There is an age when, without failing in the prescribed submission and obedience, one begins to think for oneself, finding it impossible to leave to the cruel indecision of parents all thought for the future of their child. Such is my position. In the inexperience of my age I could never judge of the utilities or disadvantages of the many careers which open before me ; but I will say that a very pronounced taste for the career of the Arts is awakened within me.

“ I believe that there exists a real and unfailing happiness in such a career, and an inward consolation which must compensate for all trials which may come to one. As far as I am able to judge, he who can be happy alone with his art, his science, and his thought, is the man whose lot is to be envied. For there are many kinds of happiness ; a man may be rich in equipages and wealth, possessing all that fortune can heap upon its most favoured child, but let him lose his places, honours, and dignities, and adieu to happiness ! When a man, however, has acquired superior talents and a science which he has studied to its depths, it is a fortune which he is sure of keeping ; it is his own creation, and de-

pend upon himself alone. I realise, indeed, that changes in the state may influence the arts ; but I believe, too, that a man who has won for himself an honoured position by his genius will be enabled to maintain it before the eyes of his fellow-men. When I speak thus, it is not, believe me, that I would assert myself to be one born for the arts alone, who must launch out upon such a career, at all hazards. Indeed, I pretend to no such honour ; but I do believe that a man who does not prefer a knowledge which may one day bring him ease, to the simple acquirement of the ease itself, should not embrace the career of the arts. Achilles, we see, preferred glory to a long life passed in adding no lustre to his name ; why may not one prefer glory in the pursuit of the art to a position which money alone renders brilliant ? . . .

“ It has been said that music has power to calm the fiercest and touch the least sensitive heart ; and, indeed, I am not incredulous. In my eyes, the man who is not susceptible to the charm of music is lacking in sentiment and heart, — not that he may not be a good man, but, nevertheless, one who is capable of being touched by a beautiful melody which speaks to the very depths of his soul, gains not a little in my eyes ; for I see nothing in creation more im-

posing and more touching than a grand musical work. Music is so sweet a companion to me that were she excluded from my life I should be deprived of a very great happiness. Oh, how happy are they who understand the divine language ! It is a treasure which I would not exchange for many others, and a joy which I hope will fill all the moments of my life."

Gounod's mother, an excellent musician herself, understood the child's letter ; but she was wise and resolved to wait. A few days later the young collegian was called before the head-master of his school. Gounod himself has given an account of this decisive interview ; of the trial to which he was subjected, and from which he came forth conqueror. He was ordered to compose an air on the words from " Joseph," " A peine au sortir de l'enfance." In less than an hour the boy who knew nothing of Méhul's romance had written his own. It was so lovely that the head-master was not only amazed as he heard it, but completely overcome. When the little fellow had finished singing his air, the master burst into tears, and, taking the young brow which was destined to earn so great laurels between his hands, he exclaimed, " Go, go, my child, and make thy music."

And thenceforth the child " made " his music,

though always without neglecting other duties, for Madame Gounod insisted upon the continuance of his classical studies. She took him one evening to the "Théâtre-Italien," where they were giving not "Otello," but the "Don Juan" that the boy came to love so much. Scarcely was the overture finished, when, leaning his head on his mother's shoulder, he whispered: "Oh, mamma, this is truly music."<sup>1</sup> Confided to Reicha's instruction, then to Halévy, and later to Berton, Gounod obtained the *Prix de Rome* in 1839. Not long after this, he turned his steps towards Italy, and from the moment that his eyes rested upon her he loved her; scarcely arrived at the Médicis villa, he felt the peace, that wide, deep peace of Rome, stealing over his soul; the great city, whose equal this earth cannot boast, spoke to him in the words with which the God of the Scriptures quiets the soul: "Behold, I will bring her into the solitudes, and will speak comfortably to her heart." So Rome spoke, and he heard; it was she who inspired him to write "Le Soir" and "Le Vallon," even as it was while wandering one evening about the Coliseum that there came to him that lovely melody which developed later into Faust's "O nuit d'amour." It may be that it was of this hour — one lovely

<sup>1</sup> Mémoires d'un Artiste.

evening of May — that Fanny Mendelssohn speaks in one of her letters. She, with her husband and Félix, her brother, had gone with their young friends to see the Coliseum by moonlight ; and Gounod, climbing into a flowering acacia-tree, sang for a long time to the stars, while he rained down flowers and melodies upon his companions.

Of the two notes which the great voice of Rome rings out over the world, the antique and the Christian, the latter at first struck most forcibly upon Gounod's ear. On his return to France, while chapel-master of the *Missions Étrangères*, he resolved to take orders, influenced, doubtless, by the example of one whose friendship he had lately renewed ; a companion of his childhood, who was destined to be among the dearest and most faithful friends of his after-life.<sup>1</sup>

“Towards the third year of my duties as chapel-master,” Gounod writes in his “*Mémoires d'un Artiste*,” “I felt a desire to enter an ecclesiastical career. I had added philosophical and theological studies to my musical

<sup>1</sup> This friend was at that time the Abbé, later Monseigneur Gay, — an excellent musician : “more of a musician than I,” said Gounod, and the eminent prelate replied, “I am less of a theologian than he !”

occupations, and for an entire winter I followed the Seminary course of St. Sulpice, clad in an ecclesiastical gown. But in all this I had strangely overlooked my own nature and my true vocation; and, in time, realising that it would be impossible for me to live without my art, I left the order for which I was not fitted, and once more entered the world."

It was about this time that another descended the steps of the Seminary never again to ascend them in a cassock. But, happier than he, Gounod descended them without a struggle and with no heart-break. He had but laid aside a mantle which was too heavy for his shoulders, and he carried away with him all his soul and all his faith.

The talents of the young musician were not long in finding illustrious patrons. In 1849 he was introduced to Madame Viardot, whom he had met ten years before in Rome. This great *artiste*, in '49, had but just created her rôle in "Le Prophète," and possessed great influence in the musical world; she desired Gounod to write an opera for her, and "Sapho" was the result (1851).

Such is the immortal prestige of the art, or rather, of the soul of Greece, that to have once understood it is to be always great; it is to be

Gluck or André Chénier, the Goethe of "Iphigenia," the painter of the "Apotheosis of Homer," or the musician of "Sapho"; no hand, if reverent, can touch these divine forms without bearing away some trace or perfume, as it were, of beauty. In the last fifty years more than one fragment has been broken away from this "Sapho" of Gounod, — his initial work; but the pure beauty of the grand, central figure stands, never to fall. Taine, as he gazed at the antique statues, seemed to see their gestures consummated, their robes move, and their long-sealed lips open in speech. "What would one not give to hear them?" he cries. "With what sonorous accents would their slow melodies reverberate through the palace of the gods!" Their discourse is not like to ours. It is "a solemn chant whose rhythm spreads and repeats itself around the thought which it sustains, as did the old Athenian processions about the sacred image which they escorted." Such, indeed, is Sappho's song, or rather, are her songs, for her rôle is varied, and the statue has more than one pose, — and still not one which is not nobly beautiful in its grave symmetry. At the first, behold the goddess appear before the judges; one seems to catch, from the very beginning of the salute to Phaon, a suggestion of



Gluck's decorum, and of his sovereign dignity. Then Sappho begins her prelude, singing the story of Hero and Leander and their loves separated by the rough waves, or of the brave swimmer crossing the Hellespont by night. Here do we find, for the first time, the melody which bears the characteristic trace of Gounod's genius, — the broad, pure phrase, so freely developed and so magnificently determined. This song is more popularly known as "*Le Soir*," being most daintily adapted to Lamartine's verses. But it is more beautiful in the opera, as it rings out above the sustained roll of the orchestra, or hovers, entranced and spell-bound, like — I know not what burning *Melopœia* — some free-soaring improvisation of love.

After the passionate ode comes the fresh, sweet "*Aimons, mes sœurs, aimons*," and this is yet another light upon the love of the ancients; this is Theocritus after Pindar, — after straight and statuesque folds, lightly falling drapery, and the pagan leisure and ease of dwelling by shores that are fraught with happiness.

And, finally, the last act, in which Gounod raised himself to the heights of the great masters, the act which in itself alone sufficed to crown him a genius. Such was Berlioz' opin-

ion, from the first appearance of the opera. Gounod writes of the effect produced on so severe a judge by the *dénouement* of his work. "My mother, naturally, was present at the first representation. As I left the scenes to join her in the audience-room, where she was awaiting me, after the crowd had gone, I came upon Berlioz in the corridor of the Opera House. He was weeping, and I threw my arms about his neck, crying: 'Oh, my dear Berlioz, come and show those eyes to my mother; they will be the happiest criticism of my work that she can possibly read!'"<sup>1</sup>

These tears of Berlioz were not ill-timed. He who had every right to be hypercritical as to a *dénouement* of this kind, — for he was an adorer of Gluck, and truly Gluck had known how heroines should die; he who had perhaps already conceived the noble farewell of Dido, might greet in Sappho the sister of those hearts so brave in death.

One always quotes the stanzas of "Sappho," but men do wrong to forget all which comes before those stanzas, of which they are but the crown. Never has music better sung the sadness of that hour of which Dante writes, — the hour so sad to those who embark and to those

<sup>1</sup> Mémoires d'un Artiste.

who watch the loved one go forth upon the sea. Nothing in Gluck is grander or more mournful than the melody which, with an even accompaniment of deep basses, lingers over each syllable of these two lines, —

“La mer et le vaisseau vont emporter ma vie,  
Et je viens assister à ma propre agonie.”

Again, listen to Phaon's anathema upon the mistress whom he believes to be faithless: “O Sapho, sois trois fois maudite !” and Sappho's beautiful response: “Sois béni !” The musician, with a touch of genius, has made of the two monosyllables a benediction which is sublime in its mercy and love.

Taine might have said of Gounod's “Sapho,” as he did of Goethe's “Iphigenia,” she is “the antique statue, an Ariadne or a Pallas, with great, fixed eyes ; not a touch of softening refinement has disarranged a fold of her stole ; neither culture nor civilisation have lessened ever so faintly the strength of her statuesque beauty, . . . but a smile of ineffable sweetness has stirred her lips ; resignation, self-abnegation, all noble incentives, have exalted the meaning of her eyes.”

And whence comes this new expression and the moral beauty heretofore ignored ? From

the simplest thing imaginable, — the sudden resolution into an unexpected chord of the seventh. But how beautiful is this use of the chord which Bettina Brentano once defined as the “liberator.” How it does, in truth, liberate this woman’s soul, freeing it from all hate and anger! What a course does it open within her heart for the flow of a tenderness which was nevermore to ebb!

All these last pages, including the stanzas, prove most clearly a truth which was dear to Gounod; namely, that the progress, or rather, the evolution of art, though it often follows a course which is quite apart from and even contrary to tradition, may, nevertheless, operate in conformity with the latter. At times it abolishes the past, and again it respects and seeks but to rejuvenate it. It is thus that Gounod in the last act of “*Sapho*” salutes his illustrious ancestors in art. George Sand once wrote to him concerning a work for which she hoped that he would compose the music: “Inasmuch as we are here setting up an altar, insignificant though it be, to Mozart, Handel, or some other of your old-time gods, they are well worthy of the garland with which you may dress it.”

His third act of “*Sapho*” is a garland hung upon antique altars. Doubtless strange new

perfumes exhale therefrom: there is a certain novelty in the harmony and in the quality of sound; as, for instance, in the English horn before the "Sois béni," and in the co-operation of the orchestra with the voices, as in the *contre-chant* of the second stanza. Quite new, too, was the element of the picturesque introduced, as the shepherd's song, contrasted with the stanzas, emphasises calm indifference of nature to the accomplishment of the most tragic destiny. However, at bottom all is serenity; how well they carry their name, those grand strophes, — *stanza*! A something which holds itself in stately dignity, which remains and endures, — a proud halt before death! Never did woman die like this one; neither Selika nor Dido, nor the fair Iseult, nor the heroic Walkyrie herself. Brünnhild and Sappho! How one would love to call them forth, the one upon her granite cliff, the other to her sombre pyre! Sovereign simplicity and infinite complexity, — the two represent and symbolise the two poles of sentiment and beauty. What has not that Walkyrie to think upon as she expires! The Rhine and Walhalla, Siegmund and pity, Siegfried and love; gods, heroes, and men; her father, her sisters, even her war-horse! Chaos presses and dashes

upon the resisting soul, which has the strength to dominate what it alone could be subjected to.

On the contrary, the soul of Sappho is filled only with thoughts of its love; her glance follows but one faint sail to the horizon; her golden lyre breathes but one name. She remembers nothing of the past, which she has vanquished, and which vainly breaks upon this rock, her pedestal of death. Thus it is that these two heroines, the Grecian lyrist and the daughter of Walhalla, expire in their opposing world of æstheticism and morality,—the one in a conflict of innumerable and vehement thoughts, the other in the unity of serene and profound ideas.

## II.

In the last act of “Sappho,” Gounod is already great; but it is in “Faust” that he is for the first time himself.

“Ne permettez-vous pas, ma belle demoiselle.”

It is at this page that Gounod's first masterpiece should be opened, for it marks, as it were, the entrance of his true genius. One has but to read in the libretto the division between the two voices of this dialogue in four verses to under-

stand what the notes add to the words ; what a grace and elegance of melody, a beauty which is serious and yet familiar in the repetition of the equal, slow values. It is a single musical phrase which envelops Faust's demand and Marguerite's reply, and yet how perfectly it interprets both ; what a demand there is in it and what a response, and how appropriate are the two movements, — the one rising, the other falling ! “ *Qu'on vous offre le bras pour faire le chemin ;* ” at the last word the tonality seems to open, but closes immediately at Marguerite's refusal. This refusal is chaste and sweet ; it is without severity or affectation, and there is a tinge of melancholy in it. “ *Demoiselle ni belle,* ” she repeats ; and this repetition, which the music alone makes possible, adds to the sense of the text a delicate suggestion of a humility which is almost bitter. Nor is that all : this repetition, so characteristic of the expression of deep sentiment, is equally so of pure music. It is, as it were, the last turn of the phrase preparing and demanding the end. And this end so carefully developed, this harmonious, gentle falling away of the music, is peculiarly characteristic of Gounod's melody ; so falls the last phrase of Faust's “ *où se devine la présence d'une âme innocente et divine ;* ” so, too, the

“Roi de Thulé: ses yeux remplissaient de larmes;” and so the exquisite melodies which bloom and die in the moonlight of the garden.

The garden-scene of “Faust”! This act, or picture, rather, was the first of its race; for, before Gounod, France had ignored this phase of art, which is so appealing and yet so profound. Save for Siebel’s couplets and the “jewel song,” nothing detracts from the perfect beauty of these pages; and the silliest reproach which it would have been in the power of pedants to cast upon them is that of pettiness and frivolity. Superficial music! say they. When in reality there is not a trace of the external world in its notes, nothing but a voice which speaks of sentiment and the soul. “Every feeling in my breast which urged me on,” says Goethe’s Gretchen, “was so good and so lovely.” And with Gounod, too, all is serious; it was many years ago that I first realised the tenderness of this music, but it seems to me that I have never yet fully comprehended its solemnity. Recall for a moment the orchestral prelude to Siebel’s romance, and, later, the strange fourths and the solemn recitative which prepares us for Faust’s cavatina, “que l’amour d’une vierge est une piété.” How sadly the music tells of more than the piety, — of the pity of



that love ! No less of sorrow than of sweetness distils itself from the harmonies and interludes of the entire act ; for much of Marguerite's rôle is bathed in shadow, — the shadow of sin, shame, and death ; and yet, far from making the character unnatural, the dark shade elevates it to greatness. No ! Gounod's Marguerite is no coquette ; the "jewel song" is but a faint blemish in the rôle, and not the rôle itself. Listen as the tonality pales and the sonorous notes die away, after Faust's brilliant cavatina. Is this a laughing child whom the pensive symphony of grave fifths accompanies with its sombre tones ? No, truly ! It is a child wounded to the heart, and with a mortal blow ! Hear it in the unvarying low note of the first recitative : "Je voudrais bien savoir quel était ce jeune homme ;" hear it in the sad cadence of each couplet of the "Roi de Thulé," in the sinister, "Oh, calamité !" and even in the startled uneasiness which makes itself felt beneath the exquisitely sweet chords of the duet.

No ; there is nothing petty or frivolous in this music. It is scarcely necessary to recall the pages the beauty of which is so familiar to all ; the quartet, a masterpiece of musical *causerie*, which, as Gounod himself says, has its "quiet

corners," through which there breathes a calm spirit which neither blasts nor consumes, and through which even in its languor no feverish emotion stains the spotless purity of the exquisite art, — exquisite, but broad when need be. Read Marguerite's confidences in Goethe's text, and then in Gounod's music, *Mon frère est soldat*, and all the story of the little sister, and you will feel that the poetry merely indicates, — that it is the music which develops, striking life and feeling from the dry words. And the final ensemble of the quartet! Never since the days of Mozart have four voices joined in such harmonies. The night comes, and all nature is drawing within herself; the circle of melodies and chords contracts more and more, and under their soft pressure we seem to go down into the mystery of the story. We approach the centre and the hearthstone, and are about to surprise the last secret of beauty, to behold the beating of a loving heart. And here, in truth, do we find the heart of hearts, — this love duet, which itself alone would prove what was this "Faust" of Gounod, if all besides it should have perished.

"Laisse-moi contempler ton visage  
Sous la pâle clarté dont l'astre de la nuit,  
Comme dans un nuage,  
Caresse ta beauté."

The poetry perhaps is open to criticism, but what music ! The indefinable charm is so strong that it seems to assume a form of sublimity, for this phrase is truly sublime in the strength of its charm alone. Like Faust's first salutation to Marguerite, it rises on regularly repeated chords and prolonged bass notes, being divided into four periods, each having a logical value of its own, — one of movement, another of repose. The first note rises as the young man's eyes lift towards those of the listening maiden ; while the tones which follow seem to float in suspense : now the melancholy is suppressed, and again it breaks forth in the last soaring flight and final descent. All endings, men say, are sad ! Not those of Gounod's phrases, for in dying they reach the fulness of their being and a supreme bloom of beauty. Suddenly the duet is more animated, as though in haste to arrive at the lovely resting-place : "O nuit d'amour, ciel radieux." The few measures which precede this, the one word *éternelle* breathed twice through the stifled harmonies as they fail and die, are priceless beyond compare.

As for the melody itself, we have seen how it was born one night within the shadows of the Coliseum. What a strange metamorphosis ! The loveliness of a landscape is changed into

the beauty of a musical thought ; and what men saw, is become that which they hear. What emotion must it have been which stirred such a song of ecstasy from the soul of the master in that evening hour ! Doubtless some ardent but vague sympathy with the splendour of the things which spread before his view ; but how was it that twenty years later this phrase, and this alone, should impose itself, as it were, upon the musician seeking for a love-melody ? Because in music, as in every mode of expression, there is but one utterance for the true and the beautiful ; there is but one love in music, or rather, pure music sings but the unity and essence of love. That which seems to particularise this melody is the dramatic situation, — the literary and scenic contribution, — in a word, all which tells us that the melody is sung by a young man and a maiden, — Faust and Marguerite. But if we eliminate all this, retaining only its sonorous form, the melody — and it is this quality which is its greatest beauty — will remain a symbol, the expression no longer of a concrete identified love, but of that faculty or affection of the soul which is the virtual strength of love. “ There is an element of chance in music,” Alexandre Dumas once wrote to Gounod ; “ you do not call things by their names ! ” And nothing could be

truer. It is not the mission of music to name things, but to reveal them, awakening within us the nameless mysteries and the ineffable realities of life. It says to us in Faust's words to Marguerite, "When thou art happy, very happy, thou mayst call the feeling what thou wilt, — happiness, heart, love, God, — I find no name for it! The sentiment is everything, the name but noise and smoke, enveloping and obscuring the burning splendour of the sky!"

It is not true, though often so asserted, that the genius of Goethe is despised and disfigured by that of Gounod. Doubtless the latter's "Faust" is not precisely the ideal of Goethe, or, at all events, the poet's first conception of the subject. The musician has winnowed, as it were, the drama of passion from the stupendous poem, and one must look at his work from this point of view to understand it. If the conceptions of Faust and Mephistopheles seem to lack the character and strength with which they have been invested by Schumann and Berlioz, it is because of Gounod's indifference to the philosophy and irony of the subject-matter. He desired nothing more of his Mephistopheles than that he should be a devil; his Faust was to be a lover — and what a lover! the sorry hero of a most ordinary love-adventure.

And yet this adventure, ordinary as it is, and therefore human, is the surest gage of immortality for Goethe's Faust. It has been said that the death of Marguerite, in the first part of the poem, reduces the second portion to "tradition and philosophical speculations, — that Marguerite, as though to revenge herself upon her faithless lover, condemns Faust to shadows and sterility. Where she is not, life is not. Henceforth it is the self-tortured brain, that seeks rest and finds none; the heart has ceased to beat.

"The poet, indeed, seems to have died with his heroine. Nothing remains but philosophy, — German philosophy! Faust is reduced to an æsthetic love, to academical nuptials, and to the embraces of a corpse. He disinters Helen and weds her, under the pretext of uniting modern poetry with the antique, in the worship of the Beautiful, — the sole generator of the Good," etc. We quote once more from Alexandre Dumas,<sup>1</sup> and his words doubtless voice the thoughts of Gounod, for the musician believed that he had chosen the better part of Goethe's poem, — that "better part" which, I think, will never be taken from him, in the judgment of wiser critics. If, therefore, cavillers

<sup>1</sup> Preface to M. H. Bacharach's translation of "Faust." M. Levy, 1873.

insist that Gounod's music is not adapted to his subject, and that the lovers to whose songs we listen are not Faust and Marguerite, we answer that such reproach is in reality praise, for it proves that the master himself rose above the particular to the impersonal and absolute; that above Goethe's Faust and Marguerite, Gounod saw humanity, and that he raised the Love of the Universe above some transient affection.

### III.

If Gounod's "Faust" is not altogether the "Faust" of Goethe, neither is his "Philémon" that of the old poets, nor his "Mireille" that of Mistral. The fault is greatly with the librettists, who touch these fragile subjects with far too heavy a hand, and still more with the pretended exigencies of the theatre, — those so-called proprieties, which are often only conventional prejudices. Neither "Philémon" nor "Mireille" could fail to lose something of their original unity under such disastrous reproduction and retouching.

The more pleasing the first act of "Philémon," the more disappointing is the second. This rejuvenated Baucis coquetting with a Jupi-

ter, borrowed from the stage of some comic opera, spoils for us the true Baucis, — the white-haired Baucis of the first act, and of the lovely *romanza*: *Ah! si je redevenais belle!* Melancholy desire, whose satisfaction we cannot but regret.

In Gounod's pagan repertory, the first act of "Philémon" seems but a charming sketch, while "Sapho" is the completed statue. The choruses of "Ulysse" throw a brilliant colour over Ponsard's pale tragedy, — dazzling tints of purple and gold gleam from the chorus of the "Prétendants," or that of the "Servantes Infidèles;" but "Philémon et Baucis" is of a lighter fancy, and wrought in with a less powerful stroke; it is but a silhouette, a profile, moving with an exquisite grace through the glades of an antique landscape, where bacchantes sing and play along the slopes.

But it is Mireille which has suffered more than any one of Gounod's works from the repetitions and reproductions of the theatre. The musician never imagined save in spirit his ideal Mireille, — the gentle, proud *magnanarelle*,<sup>1</sup> whom, in his admiring love, he sought out in her country, almost within her own home. It was not only after the poem, but in the spirit of the

<sup>1</sup> A girl who cultivates and gathers silkworms.



poet himself, that Gounod sought to compose his music.

“ I have him at last,” he wrote on March 12, 1863, — “ I have him at last, the good Mistral, so long dreamed of and sought and longed for. Maillane ! In days to come Maillane will mean to the world — Mistral, as to-day Les Charmettes or Vevey mean for us — Jean Jacques. I find in Mistral all that I had hoped for, the poet in the shepherd — in nature’s man — in the child of the country and the sky.”

And such a man was Gounod himself during two of those spring months. Hidden away in the village inn of St. Rémy, near Maillane, he occupied a clean, white little room which looked toward the sun-setting. With the exception of the young organist of the church, whom he had taken into his confidence, all the village knew him only as “ M. Charles.” From early morning till night he was out of doors, seeking the first perfumes and the earliest sunbeams, learning the lesson of the valleys, mountains, and meadow. He prayed the rich Provençal nature to talk to him and sing to him of Mireille ; then, after a week of such communion, he set himself to his task. “ After much grazing over the country,” he said, “ I must now milk my cow.” And the labour was but a joy to him in the quiet of his retreat.

"I know not," he wrote, "whether the character of my work has changed; I do not suppose that its nature can be different, for, my faculties remaining the same, that which emanates from them must surely be unchanged; and yet I am struck with the quite new way in which my thoughts work. I think and search as ever, but ideas seem to be engendered within me in a gentle tranquillity which I have not felt since my earliest youth. It is labour, but no painful effort; there is, indeed, reflection, observation, and meditation in my work, but no longer those overwhelming crises of disappointment. In fact, if I mistake not, no such tranquil thoughts have ever possessed me as those of which I now write. The instrumentation itself seems to me to be clear and precise. I try to hear all that is needful, and to write only that which I hear; and I seem to have a better, surer ear, in this peace with which I am surrounded." "Peace" is one of the oftenest recurring words in the letters of that Provençal spring-time.

"Oh, the happiness of peace," he writes, one day, "and the peace of happiness!"

And again, —

"Evidently it is *talk* which does not agree with me. I can do anything — anything which I can hear — while there is no noise around me,

—no agitation of mind or body. But the whirl, the constant coming and going of the city, kills my ideas, and in Paris they talk so much and so often ! It seems to me that the Parisians never do anything but talk, looking upon silence as a tomb. A tomb ! Why, silence is Paradise ; it speaks to us all Wisdom and all Good, whilst our tongues are silent.”

And so the master sat silent in the life of Provence, and all nature sang around him and within him.

“The country is charming. The day before yesterday I installed myself by the border of a brook and wrote Mireille’s ‘Heureux Petit Berger.’ All was profoundly still about me ; the smooth, shining bark of the slender trees, which bordered the tiny river, actually seemed to smile. I had no doubt that the birds were celebrating some great *fête* in the neighbouring branches, for I perceived that I was assisting at a concert given by *virtuosi*. . . . Long, supple weeds carpeted the bottom of the stream, gleaming like velvet beneath diamonds. . . . I can give thee no idea of the purity and youth of that morning sky ; the breath of fifteen was in the transparent, limpid air ; and the hawthorn is now in such an exuberance of bloom that the country-side is arrayed as though for its first

communion. One would say that all the angels of heaven and the young, pure souls of earth had transformed themselves into a guard of flowers to wish God-speed to the passers-by."

Young and pure as that morning sky is the first act of "Mireille." The youth of fifteen is in the limpid transparency of this music and the slender grace of its form; the bloom of fifteen in the chorus of the *magnanarelles* who spoil the mulberry-trees; in Mireille's first avowal, and in the duet with Vincent, which crowns the movement with a graceful musical gesture, which is a bit of plastic art; and the tenderness of fifteen in the lovely song of Magali. Surely Gounod must have written this, too, by the brook which sparkled over floating seaweeds, for the agile dialogue itself seems to flow, and the long holds of the chorus to spread a velvet carpet beneath the notes of liquid melody.

Gounod had an intense desire to see the spot, at Saintes Maries de la Mer, where Mireille died.

"The sight meant much to me," he writes. "I have trod with my own feet that high terrace of the upper chapel from which the dying Mireille cast a last, long look across the beautiful sea, whose horizon was to her the path to heaven. . . . In the blending of a dramatic situa-

tion with this view, there is a legendary grandeur which is intensely affecting. It lends a last beautiful illustration to the final act of the drama, and I can assure thee that in its presence the beholder has no desire but that Mireille may evermore live only with the angels above."

But, alas! they have brought her back to earth, that the sensibilities of the public might be spared a funereal finale, and in spite of Mistral and Gounod, Mireille is borne back to life that she may wed Vincent.

The work has suffered other injuries; as, for instance, in the omission of the pretty fantastic episode, "*Le Rhône*," which appears in the printed edition, and should be re-established upon the stage. Also Gounod, in his correspondence, speaks of certain fragments of the work, which are not to be found even in his autograph copy; among others, a certain finale for the duet, "*Oh! c' Vincent*," in the first act.

"I rebelled against writing this finale, recoiling before the wonderful culminating situation, which seemed to me one of those flowers of opportunity, such as confronts one as Marguerite appears at her window, or Juliet on her balcony. I felt that, through Mireille's swoon

as well as in her avowal there pulsates one of those waves of emotion which characterise the decisive moments of life, — of the heart and of love. At such a juncture, the thought of submitting to conventional forms was repellent to me ; but I have found that which I sought, and I believe that the finale of this act will be in its own way the companion scene of Marguerite at her window. Mireille and Vincent no longer have the power to speak ; happiness suffocates them. Mireille's faint, broken words alternate with Vincent's breathless whispers ; while the violins pour out a song which vibrates in explanation of the lovers' lost power to sing."

This page, and still others which Gounod speaks of in his letters, either were never finally composed by him, or have not been preserved ; and thus " Mireille " is not all which it might have been. The work is unequal, a blending of sun and shadow, not unlike the April days during which it was born. It is less a drama or a melodic poem than the music of various distinct pictures ; an idyl in the first act and in the last, a painting of earth and sky and sea. One may question whether the music of the episode of La Crau — of the herdsman's song, and of Mireille's halt in that hot desert beside the sleeping child — is, after all, the music of that

real Provence in which Mireille lived and loved. I know not ; but beyond all doubt it is the music of space and light and heat, — of “ *Midi Roi des Étés*,” — and its loveliness will dwell in our memories through all time.

As the traveller treads the stony soil of the Arlesian country, it will ever be the song of *Andreloun* that he hears while the grasshoppers spring up with a whirr from the ruddy herbage about his feet ; the beauty of that spring-time in which Gounod surprised, though but for an instant, the soul of those burning solitudes, was not born in vain.

#### IV.

It was spring once again, — the spring of 1865, — and again in Provence, that Gounod composed at St. Raphaël the greater part of his “ *Roméo et Juliette*.” Written lightly in pencil, the manuscript nearly fills the quaint old album. Within the sweet-smelling binding of faded leather, the small, fine notes — those exquisite notes — grow fainter and fainter on the yellowing paper. All is there, from the madrigal to the scene by the tomb : here is the page on which the voice of Romeo first joins itself with that of Juliet, and here the lark’s song. Through

these pages one follows with ease Gounod's method of work, or rather, of creating. The balcony duet—and that is virtually the entire second act—is written in one inspired breath; the line of song, without break or erasure, accompanies, often runs ahead of, the text. Now and then the latter is missing altogether beneath the last notes of a phrase, because the melody has burst forth beyond the bounds, not of word, but of sentiment. Here and there an indication of harmony and instrumentation shows the accord established from the beginning, in the artist's imagination, between the various elements of the work as a whole. He has unconsciously shown us the facility and spontaneity with which the opera was composed.

“I seat myself,” he wrote from St. Raphaël, “beneath the balcony, or else out by the sea, where all is beautiful; and there, drawing into my lungs the breath of these lovely mornings, I begin my day's work. It is beyond my power to paint for thee a word-picture of what happens then. . . . In the midst of the silence I seem to hear speaking within me something very great and yet clear, simple, and child-like. I seem to go back to my own childhood, and yet to be raised to some strange power which entirely possesses my being. I feel my thoughts



expanding in an atmosphere which has always been the incentive to my deepest impressions and of my happiest remembrances. And it is under its influence that I hear coming to me the music of 'Roméo.' However darkly the agitation of the world has gathered about me, solitude and reflection bring light. I hear the characters of my drama sing as clearly as my eyes behold the objects about me, and this clearness falls upon me like a beatitude."

One word here should especially be remembered: "Something very child-like," said Gounod, and he said well. "Childhood raised to some strange power;" it is almost a definition of genius; above all, of his own genius. Man enters the kingdom of the soul and of the mind only by becoming like to "one of these little ones." Painter, sculptor, or musician, whether he meditate or whether he listen, must become a child again in the presence of nature and of truth. Sense, intelligence, imagination, all must be fresh and virgin-pure within him; all which he sees and hears, he must seem to hear and see for the first time, and laying aside the old man, he must leave no habit or conventionality between himself and things as they are. Then, and then alone, does he receive a profound and direct impression;

seeking for more than reflections and shadow, the immediate vision — that face-to-face vision which enraptured Gounod — will be his.

To an artist such as Gounod, for whom there existed nothing but love in Goethe's poem, the subject of "Romeo and Juliet" appeared grander and at once more united and more varied than that of "Faust." Shakespeare's drama, though concerning itself with love alone, demanded of the musician a more profound and finer analysis of two souls which were richer and more complex than those of Faust and Marguerite. For what, in truth, was the German lover but a common seducer, — a rascal, to speak plainly, — and, moreover, the first comer? and what was Marguerite? "Ein gar unschuldiges Ding," — an innocent creature, a "thing," literally, — and the word expresses in pitying indulgence, not only the simplicity but all that was elementary and passive in the child, even in the midst of her love and of her sin.

Juliet, too, is but a child; but with what a difference does she wear the innocence of her fifteen summers! Her girl's soul is broader and less passive than the German maiden's. Juliet is a perfect creature, the ideal type of feminine love; possessing all its graces with all its vigour, — even violence; as chaste as she is

ardent, I know of nothing equal to her frankness but her reserve, and nothing but her purity, which is so beautiful as her passion. As to "fair Montagu," who would venture to compare, though ever so slightly, the pale German doctor with this young hero,—this god of love? The eminent translator and commentator upon Shakespeare has well said: "Other lovers of poetry merely represent various forms of love. Romeo and Juliet personify Love in truth and completeness.

"Shakespeare has expressed, through them, all which the sentiment of love contains, and all that which it is capable of pouring forth upon that human soul of which it takes possession. The love of these two hearts is the exaction of the absolute; it seizes upon the entire being, body and soul,—ideal and real. Thus has Shakespeare bound in one sheaf the different elements which make perfect love; his Romeo and Juliet is more than a great drama, it is the living metaphysics of love."<sup>1</sup>

Or rather, this drama is the living psychology of love; and Gounod in his "*Roméo et Juliette*," even more than in his "*Faust*," has created a psychology of music. The difference existing between these two subjects could not have

<sup>1</sup> *Roméo et Juliette*, by Émile Montégut.

escaped such a thinker as Gounod, and so great an artist could never have failed to make the contrast obvious in his work. But his success in this effort, and how equal the two masterpieces are and yet how dissimilar, it is difficult to demonstrate in so brief a space.

The whole of "*Roméo*" is in four love-duets. Suppress them, and the work is killed; leave but them, and it is preserved. They are the essential pages to be studied, for they testify of the whole.

The first of these duets, the madrigal, is significant from the beginning. Let us recall, for a moment, the first meeting between Faust and Marguerite, — the request and the refusal, in a single phrase; the hesitation of the petition, the modesty of the response, and the words, "*demoiselle ni belle*," so sadly repeated. Nothing of all that do we find here, — no uncertainty nor suspense, no one who doubts or fears. Juliet hears Romeo to the end without interrupting and without moving away, and consents in the same ingenuous spirit with which she is approached; and at the end the same melody which is pouring from his lips bursts forth from hers; for already, and for evermore, the two have but one soul, and this first sympathy of song ushers in their eternal oneness.

Gounod sometimes gave, as one of his chief reasons for renouncing the priesthood, his dread of hearing a woman's confession ; but the artist, freer than the priest, has made amends, and Gounod has confessed some most adorable penitents, — Sappho, Marguerite, and, above all, Juliet. Music has been defined as the affinity of sound and soul ; and never has this affinity shown itself more gracefully than in the second act of "*Roméo* ;" never was sound a more delicate interpreter of a lovelier soul. Juliet lives for us as much through sound as by her words. By the changing light of the music, we see the transformations of her soul, and with every variety of thought and sentiment comes a corresponding change of melody, harmony, or instrumentation. The music of these pages stands out from Gounod's work as a whole by the obedient grace of its contours and the docility as well as the liberty of its forms. The innovations of his characteristic style appear more clearly here than in the garden-scene of "*Faust*," by this pliant continuity of plot, in the homogeneity of the musical language and the equilibrium and fusion of melody and recitative. As Gounod himself said, no more do rigorous boundaries lie here, but ever a sure foundation. With what an easy grace does the

line of song run along the pages of the dear old album, and with what a subtle hand was this woman's portrait drawn! As we recall the strokes, think of the dreamy languor of those first words: "*Hélas! moi le haïr!*" And then the proud "even a little wild" surprise of the sudden movement: "*Qui m'écoute!*" "*M'aimes-tu?*" pursues the sweet questioner, and two chords, anticipating Romeo, hasten to speak for him. The dialogue is constantly broken, but never disjointed; with continuity ever renewed, it is no less a unity; now there is a brief movement full of insinuations and reticences, and again long periods of lyric eloquence. Throughout this passage Juliet plays the principal rôle, with a widely different action from that of Marguerite; she does not so much abandon as give herself voluntarily, and the child, no less wise than loving, herself fixes the sacred condition of this, her free gift. And with what a loyalty and brave purity! Through the alternating transports and vows of these two lovers the music is pervaded by a most delicate sense of woman's love and of man's; the two characterised and distinguished by two responsive, musical phrases, resembling one another and yet differing, as in Juliet's "*Et mon honneur se fie au tien,*" and Romeo's reply, "*Ah!*"

je te l'ai dit, je t'adore ! " They move with the same rhythm, each borne upon a harp accompaniment ; and yet Romeo's song, animated by a more virile spirit, springs from the more robust breast with a passion which is grand. The reinforced notes of the accompaniment, changed from three time to four, run into more eager, rapid arpeggios as the violoncellos fortify them with their deep unison. Thus all the elements of music concur to the perfecting of the moral analysis ; thus are the affinities and values maintained between the two figures, and thus does variety lighten that which might have been monotonous, and delicate exactitude clear all which might have been confused and vague.

Calmly the act approaches its completion, retarded by charming parentheses and graceful *détours* ; as, for instance, Juliet's phrase, " Comme un oiseau captif," in which the music imitates — almost reproduces — the picturesque image of the poet ; or, again, the sweet nocturne with which the act begins and ends.

Let those who fail to see any essential difference between " Faust " and " Roméo et Juliette " recall, as they listen to this epilogue in " Roméo," a similar situation in " Faust." Beneath Marguerite's open window, melodies and sonorous tones blend voluptuously ; every modu-

lation is a surrender, every cadence a fall, in very truth, as the orchestra, trembling with impatience, melts into languor. One evening, as I sat by Gounod's side, listening to this music, he suddenly asked in his deep voice: "My child, dost thou not feel the touch of a woman's hair about thy neck?" And, in truth, it was with but a faint smile that I answered the strange question, for all through this music one seems to catch a perfume and to feel the tightening of a caress in the melodies of oboes, flutes, and horns, and all the enveloping sweetness of the delicious symphony.

But nothing of all that lingers in this melody, which rises from beneath the window which Juliet has just closed behind her. This serene song, with its pure accompaniment, descends in equal degrees, with no strange, trembling accents, but ever breathing the assurance that this garden of Juliet's is not that of Marguerite, and that, perfumed with love as they both are, yet this love is not the same.

"I think," Gounod wrote from St. Raphaël in April, 1865, — "I think that I have found a little interlude which is both tender and passionate enough, as the curtain rises on Juliet's bed-chamber." And some days later, —

"At last I have it! That plagued duet in



the fourth act. Ah! I wish I knew if it is really they; it seems to me that it is! I have seen them distinctly, these two lovers, but have I rightly seen, — rightly heard them? If they could but tell me that I am right, or give me a sign of approval! I read this duet and re-read it, and listen to it with all my ears, trying to criticise its faults. I am afraid of being satisfied with it, so deceiving myself, and yet it has burned within me, and does burn even now; it is in truth a real creation, and, at last, I believe in it. Voices, orchestra, — all play their part; the violins are passionate. Juliet's hesitation, Romeo's anxiety, their rapturous embrace; the sudden accents of the few measures in the midst of the struggle between love and imprudence, — it seems to me that all is expressed."

Gounod was justified in believing in his duet; it was a creation of his genius at its best. The "little interlude which is both tender and passionate enough" is no less beautiful than Faust's "O nuit d'amour;" and by a curious coincidence, it seems, at least in the first measure, to be the same phrase reversed, falling, as it does, instead of rising. It too might well be given as a perfect model of Gounod's phrasing. It possesses all his characteristic marks, — facility, elegance, a tenderness which is both intimate and intense,

an unobstructed development, and a fall which is without precipitation. Little does it resemble the Wagnerian phrase, — some love-passage, from “Tristan,” for instance ; it does not seek to express aspiration, tendency, and effort, but rather a happy plenitude, an eternal desire, eternally satisfied. As to the nuptial duet, we may fearlessly compare at least a page of it to Shakespeare’s immortal duet.<sup>1</sup> There is nothing Wagnerian here in either words or music ; the same antithesis, the same contrast between the night and the day, are to be found, it is true, in the great love-duet of “Tristan,” but transposed there into the order and almost into the language of metaphysics. In Shakespeare and in Gounod, on the contrary, it is a concrete image which symbolises the struggle between the friendly night-shadows and love’s enemy, — the light ; and all the philosophy of Germany could never paint such a picture as do the two words thrown out into the Italian night : “Le rossignol !” — “L’alouette !” Again what brilliancy does this music add to the poetry, — yes, even to this poetry ! The transport of the

<sup>1</sup> JULIET. Wilt thou be gone ? It is not yet near day :  
It was the nightingale and not the lark,  
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear ;  
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree ;  
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

words is reinforced by the melody, gaining through it an added light and power. For a moment Gounod envelops Shakespeare and draws him on, — music like the fabled river floats gold upon its waves. If the “Roméo” of Gounod sometimes lacks fire and violence, is not southern enough in its warmth, and has more of tenderness than of passion, these, at least, among its pages are beyond such reproach. These are “two children of the country where all is light . . . ;” here speaks to us the Italian nature, with its volcanoes upon the surface, and its moral life, so prompt to show itself, so ready to burst forth from the secret confines of the inner “I.”<sup>1</sup> Melody, orchestra, all pours itself forth unreservedly; never before had Gounod shown such an expansive strength, nor an equal power of projective energy.

This power he has carried to its height in the beautiful scene at the tomb. The last act of “Roméo et Juliette” is perhaps born of a greater musician even than he who wrote the final act of “Faust;” the latter is grand in its repetition, the former in its ever renewed beauty. There is but one progression of tonality in the finale of “Faust” and in the triple invocation, “Ange pur, ange radieux;” the melodic formula

<sup>1</sup> Émile Montégut, *loc. cit.*

resting ever the same. But in "*Roméo*," on the contrary, the progressions are more than tonal, the exaltation of feeling from beginning to end is expressed by a gradation of increasingly pathetic phrases, by a redoubling of sad, fervent eloquence, and by Romeo's more and more impassioned adjurations to his dead love. The liberty of the musical thought at this point is as admirable as its abundance. This symphonic, singing music, is slave to no precedent, nor to any other system. Lovely as it is by virtue of its melodies and chords, by its tone-quality and accent, it is beautiful, too, in the elaboration of its themes, — as in Juliet's awakening, — or simply in their abrupt return, as in the repetition of the lark-theme. All conspires to make of this act a sort of assumption. The last scene of "*Sapho*" was the masterpiece of a calm which was almost immobility; whilst this lovely finale of "*Roméo et Juliette*" rises ever and moves upward to the consummation; the one music "*static*," the other "*dynamic*," say the savants. Be that as it may, let it suffice us that Gounod, the musician of love, never before wrote of such a love as this. For what is the dénouement of "*Faust*" as the light of Romeo's soul falls upon it? This higher ideal has raised its music to a higher level. The last of the

four quartets in "Roméo," confirms and is the consummation as it were of all the others ; it is the supreme consecration of that invincible, absolute unity which raises the love of the two children of Verona above the love of all history. Love, it is said, melts two souls into one, *pares aut invenit aut facit* ; and if the last pages of this opera are the most beautiful it is because in them we hear for the last time the voices of those two souls, so at one in their love, as they stand on the threshold of their eternal union.

## V.

Mgr. Gay once wrote to Gounod : " I know thy soul well. It is only in God that it will at last find true repose, and blossom into fullest beauty." The priest understood the artist : it was only after work, and fatigue, even exhaustion, that this soul finally found rest in God, there to send forth its last if not its most beautiful flowers. The musician of " Sapho " and " Ulysse," of " Faust " and of " Roméo et Juliette," of the " Rédemption " and of " Mors et Vita," passed his years in the beautiful order of a perfectly rounded life : his early days in the old world of the gods, then years of love

and lastly years of self-consecration. If his youth was that of a Levite, his old age was that of a patriarch, and the religious sentiment which never fully left him, occupied, at the last, his whole soul. I say sentiment, for in speaking of Gounod the word seems to come naturally to the lips ; but it is the religious idea, — too, that we must consider, for Gounod was a Christian as well through his intelligence as through his heart, and was possessed of no less faith than love. No contemporary artist has so shown his genius to be affected by the idea, — the passion, of the divine, and of the divine in all its phases ; he sought for and worshipped it in all Truth as in all Beauty, — in the doctrine of the gospel, in the genius of Mozart ; in a page of St. Augustine, a symphony of Beethoven, or a formula of Copernicus or Kepler. Many are the essays upon philosophy or theology found among the manuscripts which he has left : “ Études de logique,” signed Abbé Gounod ; “ Méditations sur la prière ;” notes on “ L’Histoire comparée des religions ;” on “ La Foi et la Raison ;” or on “ L’Hostilité envers l’enseignement de l’Église.” Again we find an “ Essai philosophique sur les Dogmes ;” a beautiful translation of “ Dix sermons du pape Saint Léon sur le fête de Noël ;” and, finally, among

his papers is a large sheet on which the master has grouped, in a wide semicircle, the principal articles of the Christian faith, designing a species of chart, which demonstrates the metaphysical and moral world.

It was thus that Gounod the believer meditated; but when the artist within him awoke, there came a metamorphosis, or rather a reaction; his thought was modified in passing from the domain of the intellect to that of the senses, from a speculative to a formal order, — that is, to the special order of sonorous forms. His ideas adapted themselves to that tenderness, which, as we have seen, was the essential characteristic of his genius, and Gounod, musician of the Christian world or of the pagan, was always and above all the musician of love. Scandalised by what they deem an impropriety, even a sacrilege, men have reproached him in great, swelling words, uttered against his “voluptuous piety” and “erotic mysticism.” The author of the “Redemption” has been counted little less than the Renan of music, — this equivocal singer of piety without faith, whose harp rings with the sweetness of a lyre, and who celebrates after the same fashion the love divine and all other love.

All this is more than a misunderstanding;

such criticisms show lack of acuteness as well as of justice. In the first place, let us remember that the laws by which a certain style shall be appropriated to sacred subjects, do not perhaps rule under artistic conditions with the same rigour with which they hold in the literary world. Art, being a less direct mode of expression than speech, would seem to warrant a freer interpretation, through its sonorous or plastic forms, than must be conveyed through words; and in art the ever-unsullied purity of truth, even of religious truth, suffers certain liberties. The brush does not wound as does the pen, and while Renan needed but two words wherewith to uncrown Christ, Veronese could seat his Lord at a patrician banquet beneath the porticoes of Venice without impiety. And music would seem to be still more privileged; its language, which can be so ardent and yet so pure, is that which permits the expression of divine and human love through the same channels, and with least risk of irreverence. Surely it could only be in music that the one phrase could assume to voice Polyeucte's baptismal ecstasy and the amorous raptures of a Romeo; sound may attempt such twofold duty, but words never! Moreover, what musician, or artist, to speak more generally, changes his



style with his subject ? Does not each creator, rather, reduce the infinite diversity of things, ideas, and sentiments to the unity of his genius ? Even in his secular music, Palestrina conserved his piety, and his madrigals differ from his motets in words only. Händel borrows certain pages of his sacred music from his own operas ; the Mozart of “ Idomeneo ” and he of the “ Requiem ” are not two Mozarts, and Beethoven is but one in his “ Missa Solennis ” and his choral symphony. These are illustrious examples and noble excuses if Gounod were in need of such. But is he, in reality ? Love, to be divine, does not cease to be love, and Gounod could not but sing of it as such ; that he has always given it the highest, noblest expression of which love is capable is not to be questioned ; and is it nothing that he has added its deepest note of tenderness ? Mysticism is not all of religion, nor all of piety, but it is a legitimate element of both, and, as such, does it prevail in Gounod’s music. His master-soul was one of those of which Fénelon wrote in his “ *Lettres spirituelles*,” or rather *to* which he wrote, in warning and reproof, understanding and loving them in secret, because they so resembled his own soul. “ They are all sentiment,” he says, “ accepting as real only that

which they can feel or imagine. And finally, becoming enthusiasts . . . they follow Jesus Christ for the miraculous loaves and fishes ; they would have quails in the desert, and like St. Peter, they would ever be setting up tabernacles on Mt. Tabor, and crying, ' It is good for us to be here ! ' Happy the soul which is equally faithful in the midst of material abundance or in rigorous privation. . . . Which eats the daily bread of pure faith and neither longs to taste some blessing of which it has been deprived, nor to see what God has hidden. . . . When one loses this desire of the senses, without at the same time losing his faith, he is but as a child weaned from its mother ; hard, dry bread is not so sweet as milk, but it is more nourishing."

These words of Fénelon seem to express all that which the religious art of Gounod possesses, and all that which it lacks. The food, then, of his genius is fervour and the satisfaction of the senses, the rapturous love of Tabor's heights rather than simple volition and pure faith, — in a word, milk rather than bread ; but if it must be acknowledged that there are more solid nourishments, at least none are more delicious. The great ancestors of music gave to the world the necessities of their art ; Gounod has

given us its luxuries. Palestrina and Bach raised giant cathedrals, and in their lofty shadows Gounod has built his church. White and beautiful, perfumed with flowers—with joy we enter its portals to meet with God. I like to imagine it, to hear it, as in a dream, harmonious with the music of the master; there no songs but his own should be sung,—a beautiful liturgy, composed from three works: “Polyeucte,” “Mors et Vita,” and the “Redemption.” Beautiful and complete, for in it we should find recitals and illustrations from the sacred Book, as well as meditations and prayers; serving now for the celebration of life’s events, and again for the voicing of the soul’s prayer.

“Polyeucte” is Gounod’s work of transition from his operas to his oratorios. Dealing, as it does, with love and with Christianity, one would be justified, from this twofold subject, in the expectation of a masterpiece. The work is somewhat disappointing, and still it contains within itself at least one masterpiece,—a beautiful bit of sacred eloquence. I refer to the scene in which Polyeucte reads the gospel to Pauline, as she lies in prison. In the name of their love, in the names of the gods whom they both had so long worshipped, Pauline supplicates her husband, but in vain; for all answer, he

opens the gospel and reads, beginning with the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi, "When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea." It is to the music of an old-time Noël that the mysteries of the divine truth are chanted. Imperturbable in its pious reverence, the voice recites along a single note, accompanied by but one oboe; and thus does a simple interlude accomplish that which an entire opera would have been incapable of, — the creation of a moral and historical antithesis, summing up within itself all the elements of a great subject. Paganism and Rome and the old world crumble before the notes of a shepherd's pipe. The excited patrician woman vainly resists the swelling tones. "Now," the voice goes on, "Now when they had condemned Him, Jesus was led forth to Golgotha." Who, after hearing this music, will refuse to Gounod a dignity, even a sublimity of style, in his religious art? Nowhere in music has the Crucifixion been more beautifully portrayed. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." And so, the slowly rising voice of Polyeucte seems to elevate all with an ever-increasing power of attraction. Each note, higher than the last, is stronger and more brilliant, while the orchestra quiets into sadness. Its hesitating trip-

lets creep through the shadow, but the voice mounts up and up, till at the words, "And the heavens themselves wept," breath and notes seem to fail, and reaching the summit it falls and breaks. Gounod, as is shown by the alterations in his manuscript, long sought for this beautiful cry of Polyeucte's; and only once again in his lifework did his genius reach such eloquence. In an unpublished collection of his thoughts we find this exclamation: "Man has cost—a God; and God costs man nothing." One seems to feel in these few words, as in the music of "Polyeucte," all the gratitude and all the awe of the man whose redemption has cost the sacrifice of God.

Gounod's oratorios of the "Redemption" and "Mors et Vita" are neither complete nor powerful works, and their music may at no point be more pathetic than that of "Polyeucte," but it is often more touching. They weaken and relax—with grace doubtless, and still they weaken; they are less the monuments of a robust faith than of a tender piety, and, if in time to come they crumble and fall, there will be nothing austere or terrible in their ruins. "Mors et Vita!" While this title alone—the order of the words—announces a grand design, the work shows only a sentiment, which, while often profound,

is more often only exquisitely beautiful. Its beautiful "Judex" is familiar to all ; composed of one theme, which is presented first by the orchestra alone and again with the addition of the chorus, this phrase is most characteristic of Gounod's genius. It bears the suggestion of a certain phrase in the "Faust" prelude, but immeasurably expanded, surrounding in its nobler curve a larger and more radiant space. We recognise even in the accompaniment the regular triplets with which Gounod loves to sustain his noble songs. "Judex !" What a tender judgment, in which all shall stand at the right hand of the Judge ! What ineffable tenderness in the melody, which seems not to rise as though to curse but to open in a divine embrace ! They reproach it with being passionate. Perhaps — if passion signifies love ; but not if it means suffering, for all is love in this music and nothing suffers. The Christ of which it sings is not so much the awful judge of Michael Angelo, as Raphael's Christ of the "Theology," — He who, enthroned upon the clouds, sees none but saints around Him, and beneath Him only the happy elect.

For "happy" is the significant word of this music : and the "Beati qui lavant stolas suas, — Felix Culpa !" reveals the real Gounod.

“*Beati qui lavant stolas suas in sanguine Agni.*” The sacred text conveyed to the mind of the musician more of a picture than of a doctrinal idea, a scene rather than a sacrament. I remember that when Gounod played this page of music he would comment, with an emphasis on the pronoun : “*Elles lavent, elles lavent en chantant.*” In spite of himself his characters were feminine, and for us, too, these graceful rhythms and clear triangles, tinkling like bells, evoke a pastoral that is indescribably feminine and primitive. In a mystical prairie which Van Eyck has strewn with flowers, the holy washerwomen plunge their linen tunics in the blood of the Lamb.

“*Felix culpa*” — “Happy sin that gave us such a Redeemer !” Gounod, more sensible of the happiness than of the sin, forgets here the crime, only to remember, — and with what love ! — the salvation and the Saviour. Such a melody is worthy of study, without consideration of any psychological signification. It is in the fullest acceptation of the word a melody — a musical idea — and in the following quotation we find Gounod’s understanding of the term : —

“An idea is an exact musical form, which seizes upon me on a sudden and unexpectedly, and more than that a prolific form, containing the entire passage which it ushers in : a passage which

unfolds itself, clear, powerful, *one*, in such a way that I am not forced to grope about after its robust identity. The conception emerges from the principle not by means of artifices and arbitrary complexities, but by natural generation. . . . The property of a melody is not that it should consist of a more or less vague form, but of a sharp silhouette, a distinct contour, fastening the attention from its first appearance. It should not be an enigma, a problem, but a clean concise figure; in other words, a self-existing creature. Every chance succession of notes does not constitute a melody. The succession must conclude in a complete reality living in and consistent in itself. If we take Cherubini's lovely cantilènes from Mozart's 'Figaro:' 'Je ne sais quelle ardeur me pénètre,' and 'Mon cœur soupire,' and separate them for a moment from the sentiment which they express and the delicate orchestral accompaniment, it will still be evident that they exist in and for themselves; that they contain all that which constitutes the meaning and precision of an idea, — the clean-cut contour, the characteristic, equalised rhythm, even the harmony implied in the melody."

Ideas, so understood, were formerly the very essence of music, while to-day they count for



nothing. Mozart knew no other mode of thought, and in this Gounod resembled the older master, to whom he constantly appealed. It is from the phrases of Mozart that such a passage as "*Felix culpa*" emanates; of its thirty measures not one is motiveless, still less alien to the others. Nothing arrests nor misleads its continuity; and it neither hastens nor lingers, sure of finding all along its happy path resting-places of delicious repose. Continuous and yet well distributed, it is a perfect example of order and harmony, not in its combination, which is simple, but in succession and development. Never was the cadence, so dear to Gounod, sweeter and more full of love. Before such a page we forget to ask whether the work fulfils the promise of its rather ambitious title. In "*Mors et Vita*" we realise that the sentiment more than once triumphs over the idea, but — like that sin which Gounod himself sings so tenderly — it is a "happy" fault.

"Tu fis ton Dieu mortel et tu l'en aimas mieux."

This line might serve as epigraph to the "*Redemption*," it so well expresses the penetrating charm and touching beauty of the music; that same passionate, piously amorous sweetness which seems more in homage to the hu-

manity than to the divinity of Christ. In speaking, just now, of the liturgy of Gounod we observed that it might contain both narrative and prayer. After the crucifixion of "Polyeucte" this is the Resurrection; not only the miracle itself, — the sublime uprising from the dead, but the scenes which follow, touching so closely upon our human nature, and therefore so appealing to Gounod's genius, — the holy Marys at the sepulchre, and the apparition of Jesus in their midst. Criticism has weighed heavily upon these exquisite pages; the holy visitants have been accused of too friendly an eagerness. They run too like very peasant-girls, it is said, but the critics have failed to recognise the simple naturalness of their pious haste. Who can say, then, just how they hurried along the Judæan pathway on that morning, two thousand years ago? And what could be more appropriate than this pastoral, this sad Noël of death? They ran to the tomb, these humble women, as thirty-two years before the shepherds had hurried to the manger, crying as they went; and the naïve symphony is melancholy with something, too, of the springtime, almost smiling through its tears; for they were hastening through the fresh, sweet air of an Oriental morning to render sad but tender service to their dear buried Lord. But let us

not undertake the defence of a great art, which we need not, in fact, consider as menaced ; rather let us admire unhesitatingly its familiar and touching form, its primitive but profound feeling, and its true and beautiful realism, recognising in it that twofold ideal which in Gounod's words is both "above us and in our hearts."

Such music as that which records the words of the angel to the holy women is, indeed, "above us ;" especially the last, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Before this passionate fervour, cry no more of sacrilege ! Gounod has justified himself, not only by piety, but by the strictest, simplest faith. "These cloths have touched the divine brow." These rapturous notes sing a dogma of love above all other love. "Behold my body," said Christ, and Gounod's cadence is sublime, letting us almost feel the presence of that Body and Touch Divine. And here, again, are the beauties which lie "in our hearts." Having seen the Lord, and heard Him speak, the holy women go away, not as they came, but consoled and joyful ; and their report to the Apostles, the Mendelssohnian scherzo, the pious chatter — I had almost said the gossip — of the women, and the haste and emulation of their recital, all forms a masterpiece of primitive realism and

familiar truth. Astonished, and perhaps a little deaf to the women's excited words, the Apostles doubt: "And their words seemed to them as idle tales," says St. Luke, till the necessity of convincing them raises the humble messengers above themselves; they recount no longer, but proclaim and confess as the sacred testimony bursts from their eloquent lips. There is a happy antithesis between the gentle simplicity of the preceding pages and this sacred song: "Thy paternal goodness, Lord, teaches the faithful Thy law." There is no grander movement in the entire work than this beautiful cry of holy love; and never has Gounod's melody risen to greater heights in the ever-widening circle of its flight.

The dogma of the "Redemption" was the favourite article of Gounod's creed.

"The first, luminous, fertile, inexhaustible principle from which flows, in its entirety, the grand, invulnerable economy of the Catholic doctrine, is the dogma of the original Fall appealing to the dogma of the Redemption. Outside of it, there is no solution to the religious problem; nothing but a terrible chaos over which man's misery and God's cruelty hover like despairing phantoms. But with the belief in the original Fall, and that of the Re-

demption, all is explained in an order so calm, luminous, and satisfying that the mystery itself seems to disappear before the enraptured mind and heart, so soothed is man's conscience and the world's misery by this ineffable reconciliation of justice with divine goodness."

We find a spirit which corresponds with this statement of his creed in the prologue to Gounod's oratorio of the "Redemption;" an anticipatory summary which the work itself simply paraphrases in narrative and prayer. This prologue is the most dogmatic and doctrinal of all the master's music; but even its doctrine and its dogma are warm with tenderness. The typical Christ-melody, which first appears here, is more loving, and appeals more closely to the inmost soul, than does the melody of "Judex," in "Mors et Vita." The little choral, "The earth is my possession," is delicious in its divine benevolence and amenity; while the play of the violins which crowns it, and the last words of the Saviour as he offers himself, "Oh, my Father! I come," are of an unparalleled sweetness. Thus did one and the same spirit breathe through Gounod's writings, whether in literature or in music. This short prologue, which we have just analysed, is a fitting conclusion to our study of the master,

for we find in it a last, complete revelation of that ardent soul and beautiful genius whose every thought became a passion, and whose every act of faith found its completion in an act of love.

## VI.

And such as we now know him to be, where shall we place him but in the sphere of clear thought and tender sentiment? St. Bernard's "*Ardere et lucere*" might have served Gounod as the motto of his life, for his work was instinct with warmth and light. If we choose, at hazard, any one of his finer melodies, — the stanzas of "*Sapho*;" the canticle from the "*Redemption*," "*Vos bontés paternelles*;" "*Felix Culpa*," from "*Mors et Vita*;" "*Salut, demeure chaste et pure*" from "*Faust*;" or the Lark-duet from "*Roméo et Juliette*," — each page burns with the flame of that love whose many-sided beauty we have been studying. The love which Gounod sings is less violent than tender; neither fierce nor frantic, one never fears to find it, as so often in Wagner's passion, the brother of destruction and death. And, moreover, it is the love which is loved for itself alone, in its purity, borrowing no interest either from the

world's epics, as do Wagner's heros and heroines, or from history, as do Meyerbeer's. And, finally, it is an intimate, familiar love, which was unknown to French music before Gounod's time, — the opera in France being more ambitious in those days, and the *opéra-comique* lacking in depth and poetry. Exempt from frivolity and bombast, the art which Gounod inaugurated was also free from complications and obscurities. His melody is always clear ; mind and ear seize economy and structure at once, following the repetitions and the carrying forward, as it were, of the original motive to ever-varying keys. By virtue of this characteristic symmetry, Gounod is a pure classic, and a son, not only of Mozart, but of Bach.

The beautiful "Ave Maria" proves, of itself alone, the latter affiliation. It is a perfect model of Gounod's melodic formula, and the ease with which it adapts itself to the harmonies of Bach, shows that from the beginning it was implicated, as it were, within them. The melody is lightened by the constant reproduction of like periods, but still more by the gentle descent of its final cadence into light and peace. "There can be no harmony," Hegel says, with much truth, "in chords which give only a contradiction to the ear ; there must be a reconciliation before

ear and soul are satisfied. Thus with the opposition there comes an immediate necessity for the destruction of the dissonances, and a return to perfect accord. Truth in every form of life is but such a return to unity." No musician, perhaps, since the days of Mozart, has so loved this "truth" in music as did Gounod, — realising, as he did, that this return from dissonance to consonance is the fitting end of a musical phrase, and that which remains with us when all contradictions are forgotten. Gounod's melodies seem to accomplish, or at least to follow, a human destiny; having grown to the ardour and passion of life, it is in serenity and calm that they fade away and finally die. And thus do they possess a twofold beauty: realising a double ideal and inspiring in men a longing for passion and for truth.

Even the life of Gounod himself was like one of his own songs. Peace in his latter days descended upon the soul which had been so full of fire, leaving it bathed in light. He composed but little toward the last of his life, and if by chance he took up a pen, it was to write not passionate but contemplative works, — masses in the Palestrinian style, in which he voluntarily renounces himself, endeavouring to sink his personality in that of the grand,



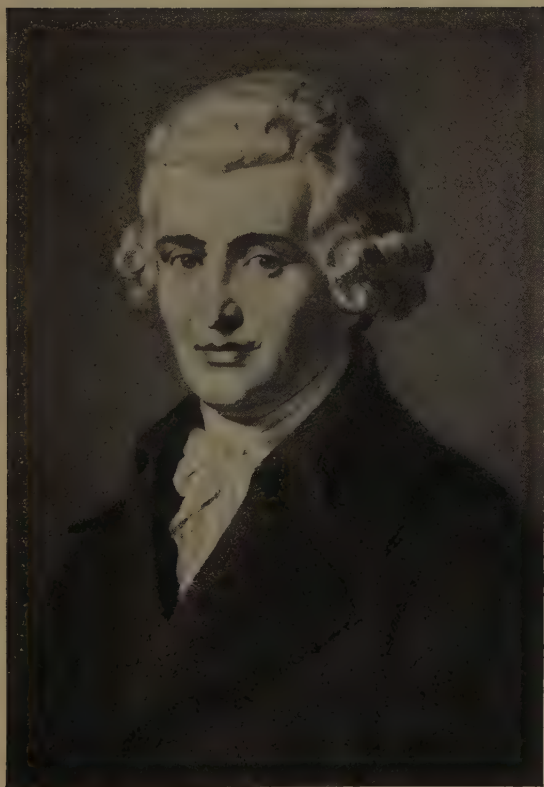
pious old artist. I recall, too, a hymn to the night, which was one of his last inspirations, calmer and more august in its quiet strength than "Le Soir." Once, shortly before his death, as he sang me this song, I seemed to see his lifework pass before my eyes. I could see all his passion and love ending in the unchanging consonances of the serene melody, and I realised that, in the genius of the master, and in his own soul, those profound words of Amiel had been accomplished: "Aime et reste d'accord."



SILHOUETTES OF MUSICIANS.

"TIBI DILECTISSIMÆ."





HAYDN.



## I.

### HAYDN.

A SPIRIT of peaceful activity and of serene cheerfulness has seemed to pervade the atmosphere of these last days, as I stirred the dust where sleeps the charming soul of Haydn. The ink of his manuscripts is faded, and the pale notes, few in number, are sown along his pages in a sort of old-time simplicity. One sees God's own air and light between them. I have read once more "The Creation" and "The Seasons," symphonies and quartets, and all without fatigue to mind or body, for I was sojourning in a world of forms, or rather of agile, smiling spirits, where none were rude and none were sinful, and few were sad; for Haydn remembered the sufferings of his youth only to pardon them. Haydn! A pretty name, simple and easily uttered. As simple as he who was to make it illustrious, for he was born of a wheelwright and a serving-maid in that land of Austria, which was Mozart's fatherland and Beethoven's country by adoption; the land which is doubly

the homeland of music, whose thoughts are German and who sings with the voice of Italy.

Haydn's childhood and youth were beset with difficulties. Taken away from his native village by a kinsman, who realised, to some extent, the boy's talents, he was admitted as a chorister to the cathedral of Vienna, where he remained for ten years, working to live, and already only living to work. At the age of sixteen he was suddenly and most unjustly dismissed from the cathedral choir, when an honest wig-maker, who indulged in a love for music, received the boy into his house. It was not until Haydn's twenty-eighth year that the great Prince Esterhazy discovered and captured the young genius for his own service. There he remained, however, for thirty years, creating in tranquillity innumerable masterpieces for a prince who was not an unworthy master. Soon after entering the home of the charitable wig-maker, Haydn had, most unfortunately, married the daughter of his benefactor; but the union was an unhappy one, and apparently one which was soon dissolved, for we find the young musician easily consoling himself in the affections of an Italian cantatrice, Mademoiselle Boselli, who was herself attached to the musical household of the prince. Rising with the dawn, clad in the



elaborate costume of a *kapellmeister*, — periwig, shirt-frill, coat of fine cloth, and red-heeled shoes, and wearing on his finger the ring given him by Frederick II., — the little man, who was the great Haydn, lived quietly on in his master's service, working gaily on from morning till night, covering with his fine handwriting the leaves of a paper which he never could find smooth enough or white enough to please him.

“He would never, perhaps, have left Eisenstadt,” says Stendhal, “if Mademoiselle Bosselli had not died. After her loss Haydn began to feel an emptiness in his days.” And doubtless it was to fill this “emptiness” that he took two journeys into England. With the shillings earned over there in the fog he bought a sunny little house on the road to Schönbrunn, in which he lived the last years of his life, and where, in 1809, he died, with the din of the French cannons sounding in his ears; praying for his emperor, and reassuring his frightened domestics with the proud words: “Know that where Haydn is, no misfortune can come.”

His country had crowned his old age with glory. On one occasion the Viennese aristocracy gathered in the Lobkowitz palace to witness in his honour a performance of “The Creation,” which was an apotheosis. Ill and infirm though

he was, Haydn was present. The audience rose to its feet as he entered, and during the concert, as he seemed to be cold — Stendhal goes on to say — scarfs and shawls were drawn hastily from fair shoulders to warm the knees of the beloved old man. When he retired, borne in his arm-chair by lackeys in princely livery, the crowd again sprang to its feet and broke into cheers as the old master passed through, holding up his trembling hands in blessing.

But the humble loved him no less than the great, and the country-people looked upon him with an affection which he warmly returned. Each year he gathered together the farmers and peasants of his neighbourhood, giving them a banquet and some silver pieces each ; he was wont to call this his “day of magnificence.” But of all the gifts which he showered upon these humble friends of his, the most magnificent was that of “The Seasons,” — those musical georgics which without doubt he dedicated in thought to his friends of the fields ; to all those who live by the produce of the earth, and near its breast ; to all those who plough and sow, who reap and gather in the grapes, and whom the musician — the first to celebrate their joys and their sorrows — has, as it were, consecrated.

It was Gounod, I believe, who said : “ Haydn

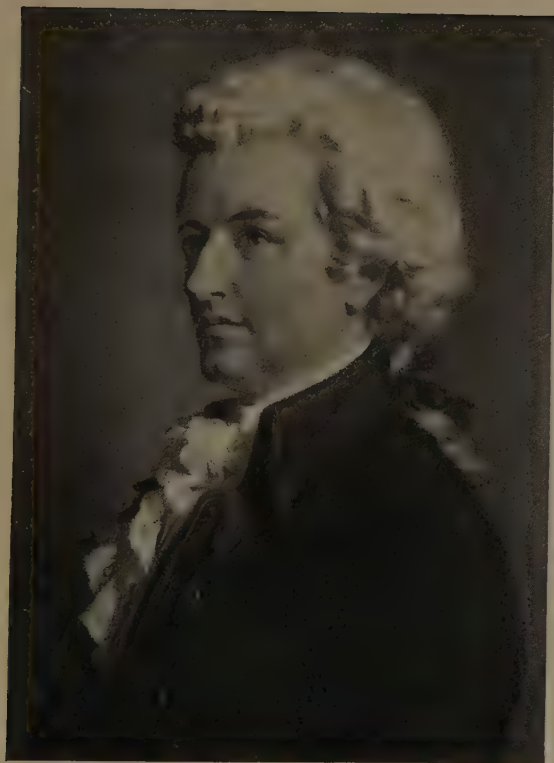
has opened the window." It is true, and by the open window has entered the joy of the country. Bach had held the German muse fast within the sanctuary, and it was Haydn who brought her forth. He led her out from the church, even from the town, and she, seeing for the first time flowers, brooks, fields, and woods, has smiled in joy.

Haydn created the symphony and the quartet, those two most beautiful forms of musical art; forms which Mozart and Beethoven developed, indeed, but without altering their original model. The "Eroica" and the "Pastorale" are but the noble posterity of such naïve and charming ancestors as the "Surprise," "Roxelane," or the "Reine de France."

As for the quartet, scarcely yet do we worthily comprehend its beauty; so much does the theatre absorb and spoil our tastes, so deeply does the public allow itself to be interested in buffoons and charlatans. To-day we think only of getting out of ourselves; and one must turn to the secrets of the heart to love the quartet, that expression musical, and only musical, of the inner life, — of meditation and pure thought; of the purest thought, in truth, unrestrained by the intervention of the drama or by any personality; of thought disinterested of all matter,

flowing on in the integrity of its being and in the full freedom of its course. For chamber music is the lovely companion of the heart in its secret loneliness; enemy of the outer world, it is the friend of retreat and of refuge, — of that chamber whose door the “Imitation” counsels us to close upon ourselves. Who shall say what treasures of calm grace and sweet wisdom the good Haydn has hidden within his peerless masterpieces!

Not long ago, at the Paris Conservatory, one of the most simple of Haydn’s symphonies was performed immediately after the Prelude to “Tristan.” Some learned persons present smiled at the first quiet, unaffected strains; but, as the agile melodies ran gaily on, I thought I saw a smile on the face of the old master whose portrait decorates one of the medallions about the hall. “With what,” he seemed to say, “with what were you tormenting yourselves a moment since? Whither were they groping, those wild ardours and those unsatiated desires? Believe me, art is not so difficult, nor life so cruel, nor joy so rare! Among the ploughmen in their furrows, and the reapers among the sheaves, and the grape-gatherers along the slopes, there are always those who sing.”



MOZART.



## II.

### MOZART.

IN 1790, when Haydn was leaving Vienna for London, Mozart, who loved the simple, kindly master well, threw himself, sobbing, into the older man's arms. "Oh, my dear Papa!" he cried, "this kiss will be the last! We shall never see one another again!" Some months after, Haydn, when he learned that Mozart was dead, exclaimed, weeping in his turn, "My friends, will this world ever again find such an artist?"

And in truth, such an one the world has never since found.

Mozart, like Pascal, showed proof of his wonderful genius in the days of his earliest childhood. At five or six years of age, his father, having one day surprised him in the act of writing, asked him what he was doing. "A concerto for the harpsichord," replied the little fellow; and the father, having read over his shoulder, and seeing that he spoke the truth,

fell to weeping from an emotion which was almost fear.

Not long after this the elder Mozart, proud of his boy's great genius, carried him through all Europe; and all Europe applauded the miraculous efforts of the wonderful child. Through Germany and France, and even to London the boy went on, gracious and smiling in his coat of lilac cloth embroidered with gold, his curled periwig, and little sword, singing, playing upon violin or piano, improvising sonatas and fugues, writing symphonies and operas, — exposing to the hazards of the way the fragile treasure of his genius.

On returning to Salzburg, he entered the service of the Archbishop, in whose house he submitted to all the humiliations undergone by the menials of the great; he was already the author of “*Idomeneo*,” whilst supping still at the valets’ table.

Knowing only too well the meaning of poverty, and feeling its privations all through his young manhood, love was his one consolation, — the love of Constance Weber, his wife. He suffered cold, — almost hunger, — disdain, and rebuffs, begging in vain for the most humble positions, and not obtaining until after the appearance of his “*Figaro*” and “*Don Juan*”



the poorly remunerated office of composer to the Imperial Court. His wife, his beloved Constance, became an invalid, who lived only through his tender, unremitting care. At the waters of Baden, near Vienna, to which she was sent, an humble chorister of the village gave her hospitality. "Thou seest," Mozart wrote to her, upon a sheet blotted by tears, "thou seest that I have wept much in writing to thee. But a fig for sorrow! There flutter about my head an innumerable quantity of kisses."

Sorrow, in the end, drowned the kisses; and yet, a prey to misery as he was, the gentle master heard for the last time happy spirits sing, as the genii and the fairies dictated to him the "Magic Flute." At last came glory and fortune, but they came too late. One December morning, at the age of thirty-five, he died. They interred him but meanly; his wife was too ill to follow his body to the grave, and in the raging snow and wind the few friends who had at first accompanied the hearse, one by one dropped away, till all that remained on earth of that wonderful genius and simple, kindly man was carried into the cemetery alone and laid in a pauper's grave. When his wife, a few days later, sought to find where he lay, the gravedigger could only tell her that he knew not

what body she was seeking, nor where it had been laid ; and since that day, none longing to pray at the tomb of Mozart have known where to bend the knee.

His life knew nothing but suffering, and yet his work breathes nothing but happiness. His art, which knew naught of his martyrdom, bears neither trace nor proof of it ; outside of and above his misery Mozart dreamed of an ideal felicity. It is with none but happy forms that he has peopled the kingdom "where dwell," says Hoffmann, "the celestial enchantments of sound." His melodies live, like the flowers, without trouble or sorrow ; when they fall in death they are ever smiling, and their fall, their death, is but the last and not the least exquisite of their graces.

God apportions beauty amongst the great artists. To each He assigns his portion in the human soul, to each his place in the house of many mansions. Blessed are the simple ! Blessed are the gentle ! Blessed are the pure ! The genius of Mozart was crowned with these three Beatitudes.

Mozart is pure ! No alloy corrupts his art. He resembles that water-course of which Bos-suet writes, which never agitated the earth over which it passed with such violence as to

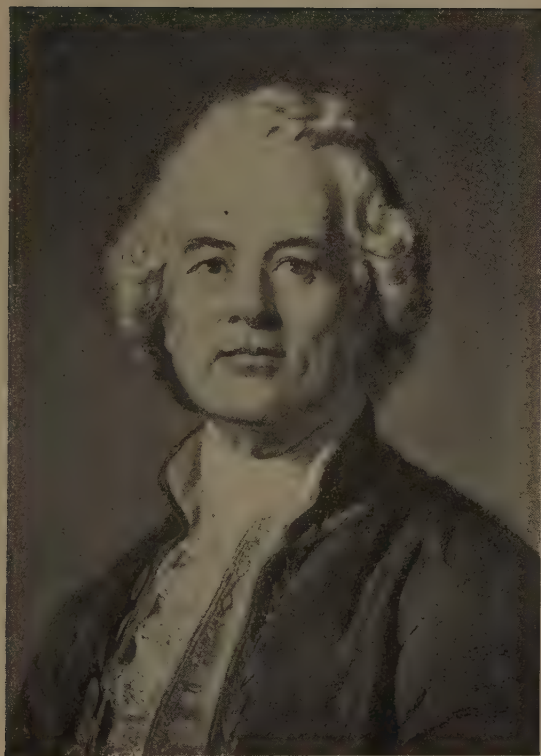
detach one polluting particle that it must bear onward in its waters.

Mozart is gentle! The poor idiot whom George Sand, as a child, saw wandering through the country, seeking everywhere for tenderness, would have found his longings satisfied in the music of Mozart. There happy tenderness, pitying tenderness, all tenderness superabounds. In that treasure of love there is peace for all disquietude, consolation for all suffering.

Mozart is simple, and because he is simple, the power of his music will never decline. There is as little as possible of matter in his work; it is all mind and soul. The ear is not delicate enough to hear Mozart; fingers are too heavy to play his melodies, and words are powerless to tell of him.

He died while writing the "Requiem," asking for himself and leaving to us that greatest of all gifts, — repose. He has done nothing repelling, nor even obscure or disquieting. He is not the musician of what we are but of what we dream of being, and of what we shall be in the hereafter. He is the musician of the future, in the eternal meaning of the word; and his is the last happy genius of music. After him comes Beethoven, the sublime sufferer, the heroic conqueror of himself, the unequalled

exemplar of humanity ; Beethoven, who is as beautiful as passion or the storm, and as infinite as grief. Mozart is above all humanity — he is as beautiful as the peace of the azure heavens and as infinite as joy. He is, in truth, “le jeune homme divin.”



GLUCK.



### III.

#### GLUCK.

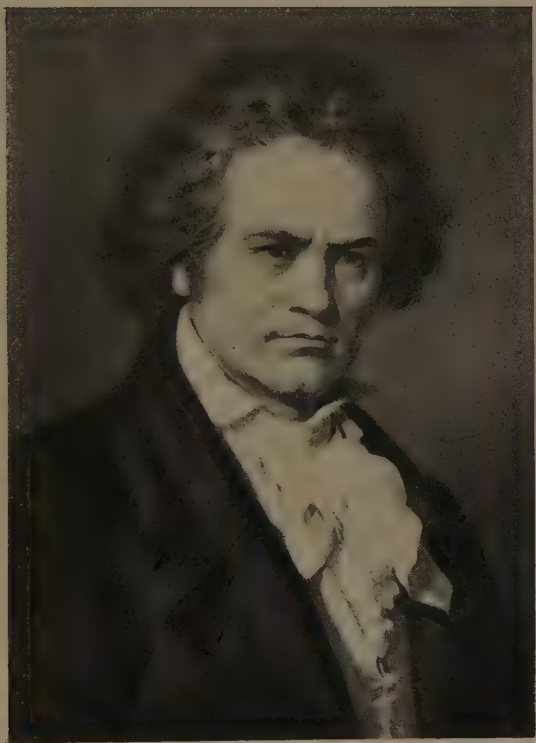
GO to the Louvre some bright summer day, when the sun is at its highest and hottest : there at the bottom of the Salle de Houdon you will find the old master. The vast forehead and disordered hair, the face all pitted with smallpox, the compressed lips, and the rugged, stern gaze of the eyes—there he is behind a slender “Diana,” and between a curly-locked “Love” and a dainty “Grief.” He looks at his neighbours, never seeing them ; such is not his love nor his sorrow. Then, when you have seen the man himself, pass on into the galleries of Greek sculpture, and there, seated amidst marble queens and veiled virgins bethink yourself of “Orpheus and Eurydice,” “Alceste,” and “Iphigenia,” and, for you, the souls will return to these superb bodies, the still beauty will breathe once more, and the marbles will sing.

Gluck was nearly fifty years of age when he wrote “Orpheus and Eurydice,” his first masterpiece ; and, indeed, one never thinks of him

which was the most fugitive, and calls forth for us an illusion, which he holds in suspense. He takes his time in prolonging our emotion, and allows us ours ; he arrests for us that beautiful moment which Goethe so longed to stay in its flight.

The work of Gluck was music's first homage to antiquity. Before his time the art of the ancients lived again on canvas and in stone, beneath porticoes and arcades, and this resurrection had been christened the Renaissance. One only of the muses had not wakened from her long sleep. It is said that in the old days Apollo, when he was a shepherd among men, once laid his lyre down upon a stone, and that the divine strings left upon their resting-place melodies which were sublime. Surely, then, it was Gluck who found the stone whereon these god-given songs lay sleeping. He should have been born three centuries earlier, in the days when heroes and heroines sprang from the soil of Rome. Then would he have sung of them in all the brilliancy and bloom of their youth ; he would have been the great musician of the Renaissance and the beloved of the Medicis.





BEETHOVEN.



#### IV.

#### BEETHOVEN.

MANY have been my misgivings at the thought of attempting to write of Beethoven in a few meagre lines. An admiration which is near a fear seizes upon one after living for but a little time under the influence of his genius. He is so great; the greatest of musicians, — one of the greatest of mortal men. The three contemporary master-minds, Napoleon, Goethe, and Beethoven, shared the universe; conquerors, respectively, of men, ideas, and forms. The writer and the artist were greater than the warrior, in that all which they possessed they had themselves created. Think of this: Beethoven is the man who has produced the most beautiful creations of sound, and from the same air which we all, indeed, breathe into our breasts, but which he seems to have breathed into his soul till it was saturated with beauty. In the domains of the other arts, which deal with relief and colour, there exists no royalty so supreme as that which invests the author of

the nine symphonies in his domain of sound. The music written before his time, even that of a Haydn or a Mozart, is a diversion or pleasure, exquisite in its charm, and still only a pleasure ; an art at times above us, and even at times quite beyond us. Beethoven made music a manifestation of life, a mode of thought, a way through which to conceive of this world and to express the conception. It is impossible to define the music of the great master, or to characterise it by this or that specific or moral attribute. Say that it possesses strength, pathos, sadness, grandeur, — and still you feel that you have said nothing. It is something more, it is music itself ; possessing in itself alone the genius of music in its fulness and its infinity.

No less than the “Archimède” of Pascal, does Beethoven throw light into our minds. Bettina once wrote to Goethe : “Music is soul, for it moves to tenderness ; but it is likewise mind, in that while it excites the emotion it also rules it.” And Beethoven could have endorsed this definition of his young friend, for, above all other, his music is mind. His work is one of the grandest productions of reason and human logic, and he who would write the history of that department of the human intellect that men call musical thought, must

inevitably recognise that it is completely and supremely dominated by Beethoven. He, of all musicians, has thought with most grandeur, force, order, and liberty; beside him, Bach is scholastic, Haydn, and even Mozart, a little thin, Mendelssohn too elegant, Schumann obscure, and Wagner extravagant.

So pure is the intellectuality of Beethoven's genius that he has almost ignored the realism of the theatre. Creating ideas and figures, his word did not make itself flesh. Such abstraction is unexampled in the realm of the arts; painting and sculpture have their models; architecture even, when she raises a palace or a temple, confines herself within the limits of the chosen subject; but in Beethoven's mind, on the contrary, the thought exists and lives emancipated from all concrete form. Without name or form it operates, free from any determining, and therefore any impeding, influence.

But Beethoven shines upon the soul no less than upon the mind, and in this twofold glory lies his incomparable splendour; he is more sublime, perhaps, in his passion than in his reason, and before and above the reverence which is due to the grandest intellect of music, we may love the unparalleled greatness of his heart.

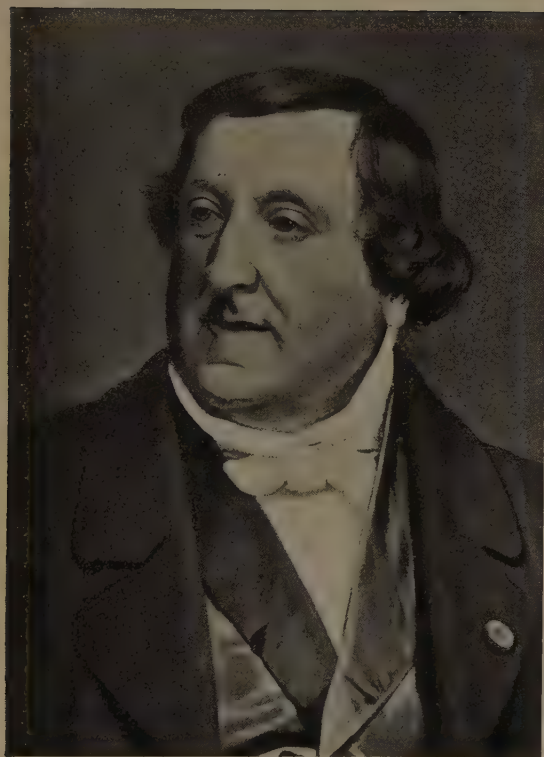
Carlyle justly calls every superior man a

## V.

### ROSSINI.

ROSSINI, passing through Vienna in May, 1822, had a desire to meet Beethoven. According to some, the master of the symphonies received the author of "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" with scanty warmth, and according to others, he refused an interview altogether. In truth, the two had nothing in common, for Rossini was quite the opposite of a hero; far from pretending to any success at self-mastery, he was his own complacent and obedient servant throughout his life. Nature gifted him with genius and laziness, and he tasted the delights of both. He created much and yet worked but little; to become immortal, he needed only to be born, and his masterpieces are not the offspring of his labour, but of his leisure, — *deus haec otia*, — of his divine leisure.

What did he do in the hot days of his youth? Be not displeased that in the glow of his twenty years, and through the warm summer days of



ROSSINI.





his beautiful Italy, he did nothing but sing. From Venice to Milan, Rome, and Naples he went, always with a melody — like a flower — on his lips. We must forget the serious and premeditated in art to judge of, or even to understand, Rossini ; we must banish all thoughts of will, and work, and effort. “ Yes,” said he in his old age, to one of his friends, “ I have my Italian career to reproach myself with ; but, after all, I was young in those days, my friend, and poor. I had to live, and to support a father and a mother.” Father and mother were, the one a player upon the horn, the other a *seconda donna* in the provincial theatres ; and Gioachimo, like his parents, was a strolling musician.

Through the writings of Stendhal we know the mechanism of the Italian theatres of those days and that quality of pleasure which the public sought in them. Two or three months before the opera season, the impresario, whoever he might be, hastily gathered together a *prima donna*, a *tenore*, a *basso buffo*, a “ second lady ” and “ third man,” and finally a composer to write for the several voices what was then called an opera. Now from 1810 to 1816 Rossini was none other than such a composer, of something like twenty just such works. “ You know,” he said to the pedants of his time, ac-

according to Stendhal, "you know that I have scarcely six weeks in which to compose an opera. I amuse myself for the first month.— And when would you have me amuse myself if not at my age and during my success? Would you have me wait till I am old and envious? Finally the last fortnight comes, and I write every morning a duetto or an air, which they rehearse at night." If it chanced to be in the springtime, he wrote this "air" or "duetto" in the sun; if it was winter, for lack of a fire, he would write in bed; and if a page on which he had begun to write slipped to the floor, rather than disturb himself he would take a fresh sheet and scrawl off something new.

With all this genius, beautiful as a god, and improvising love as easily as music, it is no wonder that *prime donne* and titled ladies contended for his society, or shared it, rather; and if by chance such an arrangement involved difficulties between two less accommodating rivals, he would sing them a gay air, and forsake both ladies forthwith.

On the day promised, his opera would be in readiness, a true *festa sotto i raggi del sole*, according to the pretty popular expression, a burst of laughter in the Italian carnival. In those days it was, for the most part, such operas as

"Tancredi," "Italiana in Algeri," "Pietra del Paragone," "Aureliano in Palmira," or "Turco in Italia," that were given; or perhaps "Otello," or "Il Barbiere di Siviglia," — in the one a page or two of sublime sadness, the other a masterpiece of joy. Light and external, but living, it is a joy of the senses rather than of the intellect or of the heart, — a natural joy, like that of the sun, the flowing streams, or the birds. In truth, this grand trifler, in his early days, turned to a jest all that is most serious in life or tragic in the soul; he transfigured or disfigured everything with a laugh. With the same *insouciance* — one is tempted to say insolence — he wrote a "Barbiere di Siviglia" superior to Beaumarchais's and an "Otello" which is almost a parody on Shakespeare.

Both works were equally applauded; his world accepted the lavish waste of his genius, without attempting to choose or control. The feast which he spread for enraptured Europe was like one of those baptisms of the fairy stories in which handfuls of gold are thrown pell-mell into the crowd.

For twenty years did he play thus, and then, one fine day, he conceived the thought of taking himself and his fellowmen seriously. He realised, at last, that he had a soul which must speak

to the soul of others, and thus he spoke of country, of love filial and paternal, of nature and of liberty. His genius approaches with its wonderful facility the noblest of human sentiments and the grandest of earth's scenes, and the author of "*Il Barbiere*" becomes the smiling author of "*William Tell*." But his smile is deep and calm now, for "*William Tell*" is a masterpiece of peace and serenity. Sublime in its characters, and more sublime still in its nature, this music, in its elevation and grandeur, is indeed the music of the mountains, and, in its fresh purity, the music of the lakes. The mystery of the forest lurks in it, and brilliant as the day, it is yet as gentle as the night. The heroes which it sings are no more ; the turf of Rutli guards no trace of their steps, and no furrow of their oars lies through its waters ; but the nature which this music sings, and which will remain forever, will not cease to associate with its eternal beauty that of the masterpiece in which it sees its own loveliness reflected.

Rossini wrote "*William Tell*," and from that day till the end of his life did nothing more ; for it was as nothing to him — that "*Stabat*" which, like a crown of brilliant flowers, he hung one Good Friday upon the cross. Having in a few years paid off the debt which he owed to his

genius, he set himself for a long fifty years to the discharge of his duties toward his laziness and his appetite. The musician became a cook ; and, more proud of his macaroni than of his operas, he wrapped himself in his repose as in a cloud, from which there broke every now and again a burst of laughter. And thus, in the midst of his good dishes and his jests, did the author of “ *Il Barbiere* ” and “ *William Tell* ” grow old and die ; that Rossini whom some one has cleverly described as a mixture of Punchinello and Jupiter Olympus.

## VI.

### WEBER.

“I CANNOT praise this book too highly. It is fragrant with the most delicate flowers of the German mind, and he who would study the German people in their most favourable light should read it. It lies open before me, and as I write I seem to catch the odour of our northern lindens.”

The words are Henri Heine's, concerning a collection of songs once published by D'Arnim & Brentano, called “l'Enfant au cor merveilleux.” And thus might one describe “Der Freischütz.” As I write, its pages, too, as they lie open before me, seem to exhale the perfume of the lindens and firs of Harz. On some of its pages shines the calm summer sun of a German Sunday, while over others, pale in the light of the moon, hovers the poetic weirdness of a German night. Weber, patriotic above his fellows, was the well-beloved son of Germany, in very truth its “*enfant au cor merveilleux*.” After the first representation of the “Tetralogy,” Wagner,



WEBER.





intoxicated with his own genius, dared say to the Germans, "Now you have an art." But his land had long since boasted a national art; "Der Freischütz" had been one of Germany's masterpieces for sixty years when the "Ring der Nibelungen" was born. And to-day it still holds its place; for, simply and profoundly popular, born of and for the people, it is to them a part of their land and sky; their language, and of their very blood and soul.

For "Der Freischütz," which embodies Weber heart and soul, is Germany herself. Not a trace do we find in its pages of anything Italian or classic, — this is the real opera of German romanticism, and the first in which there has been any suggestion of disquietude or trouble or fear. The Haydn of "The Creation" and "The Seasons" greeted the country with a gay smile; the Weber of "Der Freischütz" was seized with fear when he discovered nature. He crowned the brow of the queen of night with no diadem of stars, as did Mozart; and it was of no serene splendour and radiant life, such as Rossini saw, that his strange voice sang, but of a secret undiscovered and vaguely terrible.

All this is purely German. It is not the qualities of right and wrong only which vary with the various climates in which men and

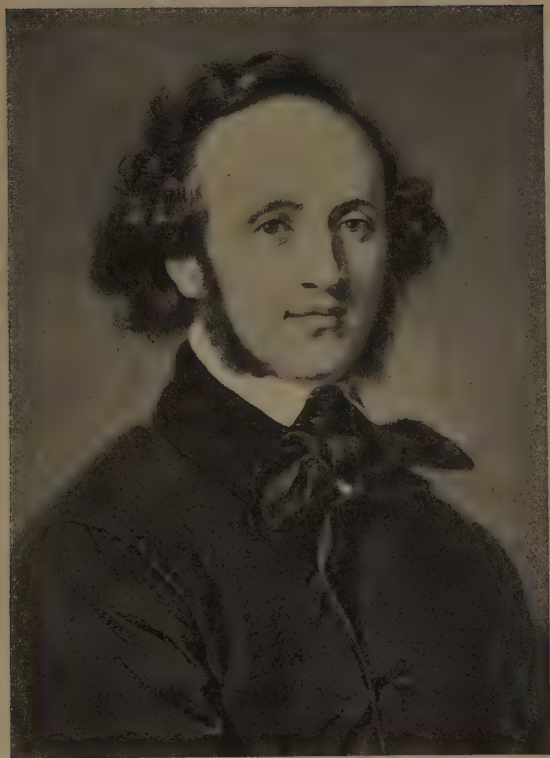
women live and sin and suffer. Three degrees of elevation may overturn the rules of æstheticism as well as of jurisprudence, and a meridian or a river will decide the idea of beauty as clearly as the idea of truth. The beauty of southern Europe consists in an external loveliness and the evidence of things admirable to the senses ; while, on the farther bank of the Rhine, beauty is enshrouded in uncertainty and mystery.

Weber was the first of the great musicians to voice the mystery of which the poet sings : " the mystery of the waves, of night, and the forest." He adopted the most sober and the most powerful interpreters for his thoughts, one of his characteristics being the strong popular colour of his songs. No music is more naïve and at the same time more profound than his ; it is ever German blue eyes that look out at us beneath locks of fair hair. But this is not all ; Weber is a German romanticist by virtue of the timbre of his instrumentation as much as, if not more than, through his melody. Well do we know what a picturesque eloquence he has given to certain instruments, what a power of appeal and of description. We hear the very voice of the forest in the horn, which was never used before Weber's time, save for the fanfares of the chase. It is with a roll of the drum that he darkens

the sky ; but presently the note of an oboe pierces the cloud, the sun smiles, and as the 'cellos sing, down there between the green shutters of that little house we espy the huntsman's sweetheart. Simple folk, all these characters in "*Der Freischütz*." Weber did the honours of his genius to forest guards and riflemen ; to the people, in other words, and therein lay a beauty hitherto unknown to music. I well remember an evening several years ago at Dresden ; during the preceding fortnight I had twice heard the complete "*Ring der Nibelungen*," and this evening had been listening to "*Der Freischütz*." After so much of heroes and gods, the simple country-people charmed me more than ever, because they were but men. Going out into the evening air, I sat down by a bronze statue of Weber, which was not far from the opera-house. It was a lovely night ; a fountain was flowing near by, with a musical sound, and the breath of the woods, which encircle the city, was in the air. As I sat thinking over the great works which I had heard, — the old genius of Germany and the new, — I felt springing up within my heart a wave of great admiration and tenderness for the soul of Weber. Blessed be the sublime, familiar master of the old days ! Blessed be he who, popular in deed and in truth,

came to the humble and the small, revealing to them the soul of their race and of their Fatherland.

For he greatly exalted these "little ones," and raised the humble to high honour. However German Weber was, he was still more human. "Der Freischütz" was symbolic and suggestive — for these terms are in the fashion to-day; listen to the very end of the beautiful song of joy. Who then is acquitted and redeemed here? Max the huntsman alone? Nay, verily, but every man who has sinned and is repentant, every soul which was wellnigh lost and is saved! As for that curiosity for what may be called the supernatural, who has not felt the desire which torments Agnes's sombre lover? There are certain days when we all have felt a mystery of uneasiness, almost of fear, haunting the clouds and rocks, the torrents and all nature. Far from the truth was that voice which once sang to the waters, that Pan — the great god Pan — was dead; he is immortal, hiding in the forms and apparitions of nature. He draws us to himself and ever tempts us; for it is he whom Weber sought and found in the depths of the Wolf's Glen.



MENDELSSOHN.



## VII.

### MENDELSSOHN.

**F**ORGOTTEN is the great artist, to-day, or despised rather. Wagner detested him, and too many Wagnerians follow their master's example. M. Lamoureux fails to understand him, plays him badly, and the Société Nationale hate him perforce. Apparently M. de Bréville undervalues him, and certainly M. Chausson has no love for him.

But Goethe loved him. "I am Saul," the aged poet wrote to the young musician. "I am Saul, and thou art David. Come to me when I am sad and discouraged, and quiet my soul with thy sweet harmonies." He called him precious, a divine young man, and sending him once a manuscript of "Faust," he wrote on it, "To the powerful, sweet master of the piano."

Let us follow Goethe, and range ourselves on the side of David and against the Philistines. Let us love him, than whom none could be more lovable ; possessed of an ardent soul and

noble heart, he lived with the gaiety of a child, the enthusiasm of a great artist, and the seriousness of a young sage ; a delicious genius, arrested, rather than crushed, by death in the bloom of its youth, Mendelssohn possessed all gifts, all graces, all charms, even the charm, so supremely attractive, of happiness.

“A *bourgeois* musician,” they tell us nowadays — the famous “they” to whose absurdities the world is grown so used. The master of “Elijah” and “St. Paul” a *bourgeois* ! — “St. Paul,” in which there floats over the martyr that song which the ’cellos accompany and so delicately sustain, — a song as noble and pure and divinely sorrowful as is the figure of Christ in the “Descent from the Cross,” at Antwerp. And I know in “Elijah” a song or rather a sigh of the prophet which is weighed down with a graver lassitude, heavier with sacred weariness, than are the verses of the poet of “Moïse,” who surely is no poet of the *bourgeois* : —

“O, Seigneur, j’ai vécu puissant et solitaire,  
Laissez-moi m’endormir du sommeil de la terre.”

Such is the austere, Hebraic side of Mendelssohn’s genius, the powerful master of whom Goethe speaks, but of whom the world knows



but little; and again in the "Midsummer's Night Dream," "Fingal's Cave," the "Songs without Words," and the symphonies, is the Mendelssohn known of all men; the sweet master, elegant and distinguished, whom, in this phase of his genius, as in the other, Goethe knew and loved.

The overture to "Fingal's Cave" is a sound aquarelle. Few music pictures so fulfil the promise of their title, and few of them so rise to the idea which they voice. Mendelssohn has not merely described what one hears in these singing, half-imprisoned waters, in the echoes under the vaulted roof and the kisses of the swell along the rocks; but with quickened senses we seem to *see* the irised space, the mother-of-pearl reflections, or the translucent sub-marine waters, and now and again, the humid freshness of the Cave of Fingal brushes across our brows.

After the music of the waters, there comes in the "Midsummer's Night Dream," the music of the air. An overture all lightness and vibration; a scherzo, which dances along the tips of the bows with the hum of the violoncellos and the gliding of the flutes; a murmuring duet, in which the flutes, grave and slow now, are the points of light; a *nocturne*, slumbering upon the

greensward of a Shakespearian park ; and, at the last, an *allegretto*, a little agitated in its movement, but so little that one knows not whether it betrays the trembling of a soul or of a rose. And all this in one delicious symphony, — a symphony of the atmosphere, whose musical transparency and liquid sweetness is unrivalled and beyond compare.

But such pictures as “A Midsummer’s Night Dream” and “Fingal’s Cave” are, in a way, but the external genius of the artist, and not the man himself. It is in the “Songs without Words” and the symphonies that we must seek the real Mendelssohn, — the timbre and the tone-qualities of his soul’s charm.

Poor old “Songs,” forsaken to-day ! Without words, indeed, but not without thoughts, nor, above all, without dreams. They are grown old, the critics say, and out of date. Perhaps, and yet they bear the date of tender memories ; for the “Songs” had ceased to be forbidden fruit to the little ones, and often, between the two classical pages of a Bach fugue and a Clementi *étude*, an indulgent master would slip one of these melodies. They bear poetic names, and the child who had deciphered the “Hirtenlied” or “The Cloud” believed in his ingenuousness that he had discovered

the infinite depths of melancholy and of passion.

For Mendelssohn is easily melancholy; his soul is often keyed in the minor, — in the sweet A minor of his Scotch Symphony. He can be passionate too, but his passion moves but lightly over his genius; it rouses him, but never to frenzy or even to trouble; he loved its emotion, but he fled incontinently from its disorder and folly, and even in giving way to it never lost command of himself. He was possessed with a love of reserve and an æsthetic and moral steadiness. In one of his letters, written upon some journey, he complains of and excuses himself for having gone for three days without a cravat. In music, he was never guilty of losing his cravat, proscribing all slackness or negligence in his work as in his toilet.

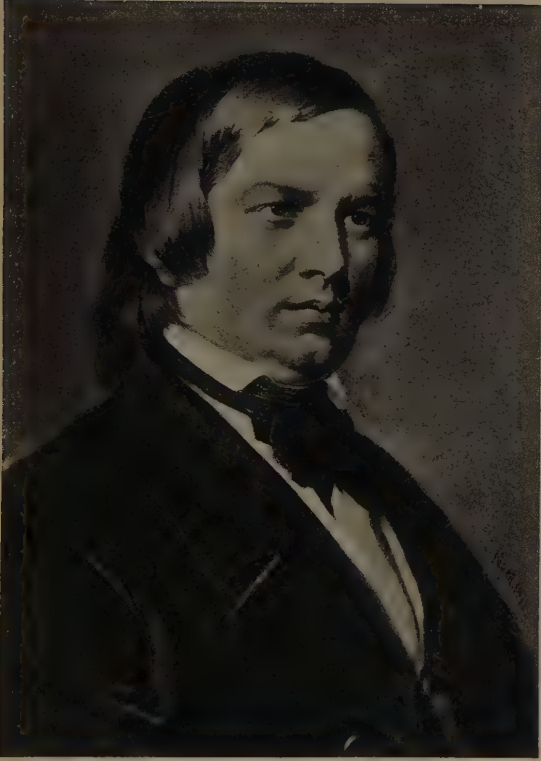
He was mindful of conventionalities, and rightly; for, in a sense, what is art itself but a supreme conventionality?

And, moreover, Mendelssohn was given to no extreme expressions or paroxysms of sentiment. Rarely did he say a sublime thing, but often something exquisite.

Here and there, for he was sensitive, shadows pass across his genius, as they must across the most serene soul and the purest happiness;

but he was wise, and though the shade passes it never lingers.

Listen to the wedding march in the "Midsummer's Night Dream," young lovers, as it conducts you to the altar, and you whom it leads away,—made one. The music of Mendelssohn should ever accompany the nuptials of love, for it sings a passion which alone can make love perfect, and a wisdom which alone can make it lasting.



- SCHUMANN.



## VIII.

### SCHUMANN.

“Aus der Heimath hinten den Blitzen roth  
Da kommen die Wolken her.”

DO you know this *lied* of Schumann's, which floats with such an inexpressible sadness above its mournful arpeggios? When I first heard it, long ago, a young lady sang it. It was towards the close of an Oriental spring, and I sat near an open window which looked out on the blue sea and sky of Alexandria. Of a sudden, I seemed to see through the eternal, unbroken azure the clouds of Europe; and in the midst of that Eastern splendour of things visible I longed for uncertainty and shadow, for the Northern ideal clothed in its mystery and sadness; and I would fain have asked the singer, in Henri Heine's words: “Madame, do you not smell the odour of the lindens?”

Never will those German lindens shelter a sadder destiny than that of Schumann. As a child in Zwickau, he picked out his first chords on a miserable piano which had been relegated

to the back room of his father's little book-shop; as a lad he lost the father who had looked kindly on the boy's precocious talents, and, left to the harsh guardianship of a mother who entirely opposed his musical development, it was not until his twentieth year that he succeeded in overcoming her resistance. "At last," he wrote then, "the sun shines in my heart." But his sun was not long in setting; for scarcely three years had gone by when he received one night, which he somewhere speaks of as the "terrible night," the first warning of that dreadful inheritance to which he was in the end to succumb. What evenings those must have been which, after this, he spent in the Leipzig beer-gardens, trying to ward off some more fatal disorder in the fumes of smoke, and doubtless of drink. *Davidsbündler*, companions of David! Such was the name adopted by his confrères, fellow-labourers with him in a musical journal which he had edited. Alas! If he was David, he was also Saul; and the gentleness of the music-loving shepherd lad within him was never to heal the spirit of the gloomy king.

Even his love cost him dear; for the father of his fiancée would have nothing to do with him. "A great part of the suffering and strug-

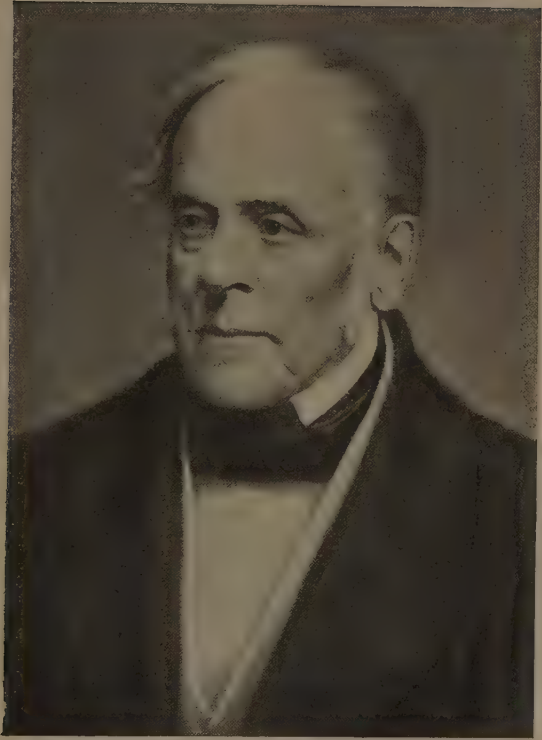


gles which Clara cost me," he writes, "have found a voice in my music." But in the end his love triumphed; and the poor, distempered genius took refuge in an affection which, indeed, sustained him for fifteen years, but which could not save him. The disease returned with redoubled virulence; until the hallucinations, more and more frequent, at last never left his mind clear. While in Düsseldorf in 1854, though surrounded by friends, he one day stole away and threw himself into the Rhine. He was rescued, but only to a hopeless insanity; and two years later death, the actual merciful death, came to deliver him from what he had once called in horror his living death.

Schumann's genius inevitably felt and was affected by his disease. The author of "Faust," "Manfred," and the "Lieder" is no joyous, serene master, such as was Haydn or Mozart; and still less does his genius, like that of Bach, appeal solely to the intellect; nor is he, like Beethoven, the master of passion and of heroically vanquished sorrow. Schumann voices an omnipotent passion and an invincible grief. Only a mediocre symphonist because wanting in order and logic, he is an unequalled lyrist by reason of the depth and strength of his emotion,—greater even than Schubert in his lyrical genius,

terness: and this investment of human personality with infinite power is the very height of lyric art.

But perhaps of all his "Lieder," the simplest and the most humble are the most original; for Schumann was the great master of familiar, homely lyric art. Do not relinquish those sweet, heart-rending songs of his to the public, but save them for the sacred hours of some secret sadness; they scarcely seem to be music in their dumb suffering. Uncertain in their suspense, incomplete, vanishing in a sob or a sigh, they last but for a moment; but in them is a sorrow which is infinite, even as all the bitterness of the ocean lies in one tear.



AUBER.



## IX.

### AUBER.

ONE cannot be always in the company of the great musicians, so let us give a thought to Auber, — it will not cost us many moments.

He has been called the Voltaire of French music; in sober truth he was no greater than its Scribe, but he was every inch a Scribe, as the latter was, indeed, no less exactly, the Auber of the French theatre. “Both have mind, grace, sentiment, passion,” wrote Henri Heine of the poet and the musician; “the one is lacking in poetry alone, — the other only in music.” Scribe-Auber, Auber-Scribe, one god in two persons, for they were, in very truth, the god of a whole generation. They possessed a marvellous affinity for one another; for forty years the Opéra-Comique was composed of Scribe and Auber, as a drop of water is composed of oxygen and hydrogen. Their union was not a combination, but so perfect a blending that the words might have been Auber’s and the music Scribe’s, with precisely the same result.

In rereading a dozen of their pieces I found myself living once again in the most absurd but amusing world of gentlemen and shop-girls, diplomats and *prime donne*, senators and gondoliers. Once more do I see novices running to masked balls, thieves paying court to English ladies, and a young traveller, after a friendly cup of chocolate one rainy day, marrying the niece of a counterfeiter, only to find his wife developing later into the Queen of Portugal; — these marvels being accomplished always to the air of a waltz, quadrille, or polka. All sing, dance, laugh, skip, and sparkle; no one is ever vulgar, but all are extremely ordinary; this trifling music, now and then very charming, sometimes *spirituelle*, and even furtively sentimental, goes to one's head like cheap wine.

M. Jules Simon once said of Auber, with much truth: "His name is — facility." And again, but with less reason: "He is a magnificent exception," for though with Auber everything is facile, little or nothing is magnificent. He was never at the head of the French school, not even of the famous Opéra-Comique; its real masters are back of him. To place Auber above Monsigny, Grétry, Boïeldieu, or "Le Maçon," and "Les Diamants de la Couronne" above "Le Déserteur," "Richard Cœur de Lion," and "La

Dame Blanche," is to raise the king of the moment above the legitimate king. "Demain c'est le sapin du trône;" no, not even the fir, for of that noble wood are the masts built which brave the tempest, and the coffins made for our dead; but the mahogany rather of which the *bourgeois* make their furniture.

Auber is *bourgeois*. Only once — in *Masaniello* — is he popular, in the deep, true sense of the word; and then not in that favourite duet of the people: "Amour sacré de la patrie," but in the air of "Sommeil," the one truly beautiful page which he ever wrote. There, by some chance, he touches the heart of the people; in it he seems to understand the simple and the unhappy, pities them and loves them. In a few reverent, tender notes he implores for them the blessing of rest, and over the swooning Fenella, the brotherly voice of the fisherman spreads a mantle which covers, as Cervantes says, not only human thoughts but human sorrows.

And then this vaudeville-musician returns to his *flonflons*.

If only he had sought out the grace and even the beauty which lies hidden in the most humble walks for those who know to look. If he had but extracted from the daily life of the most medi-

ocre destiny some of the charm and perfume concealed within its modest happiness and quiet suffering ! But no ! In place of showing the humble and the small that poetry and truth lay within their reach, and that the flowers which lie low in the grass are still flowers, he dragged them away from their surroundings, and disgusted them with themselves. He set them dreaming of romantic shopkeepers and ecstatic doorkeepers. He turned their heads and worked upon their imaginations, and gave them square dances and penny songs for their music and their poetry.

He was jesting, they say. No doubt, and we will take him no more seriously than he took himself ; but what sorry jesting ! Even Rossini, the great laughier, never laughed in this wise. Read over the musical comedies of these two men ; compare, for example, the trio in the first act of "*Le Domino Noir*," however charming it may be, with the final trio in "*Comte Ory*," and you will see how that thread of niggardly gaiety is lost in this flood of joy.

In speaking of a musician whom he considered too serious, Auber once said : " I expect he will be attempting to make benches and arm-chairs talk." I do not know that the musician



in question ever had any such intention, but Auber himself entertained just such hopes all his life, and with most successful results; but are benches and armchairs just those things which should be made to sing? Doubtless the music which he wrote was most appropriate to the words of Scribe, but it is quite within reason to suggest that Scribe's words needed no music. Auber has given far too good an illustration of Beaumarchais's saying, that men set to music words which it would be a waste of breath to utter in ordinary conversation.

Let no one call him the musician *par excellence* of the French people; French he is, no doubt, but after a very small fashion. It is French to drink cheap wine of a Sunday at Bas Meudon, in a crowd of students and *grisettes*, but happily France can boast a better vintage, and grander landscapes, and a truer love, than these.

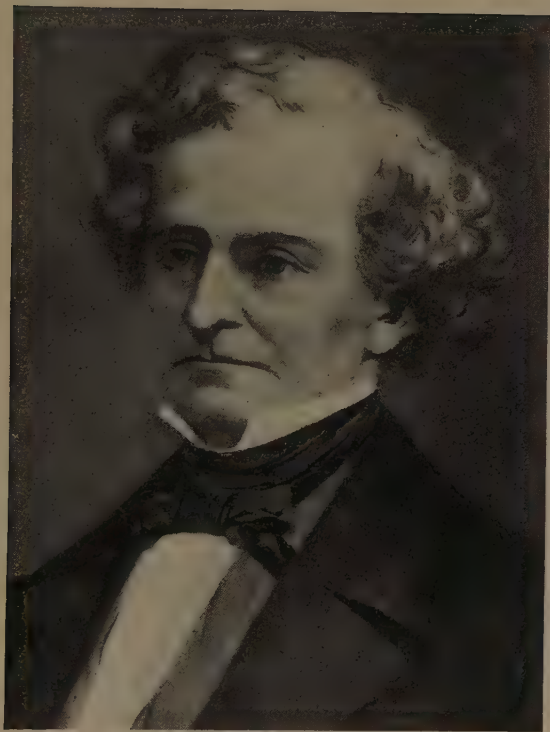
## X.

### BERLIOZ.

GREAT as an artist, greater as a musician, his was an extraordinary genius, shared, as it were, by two strangely unequal souls: at bottom intensely romantic, Berlioz was often purely classic in his writings.

His life was but one long transport, now of love and again of hate, always passionate and nearly always sad. He dwelt up amidst the thunders and lightnings of a Sinai, but when he descended from the mount, the people, his own people at least, had no faith in him.

It was love which first caught him in its grasp. He was twelve and she eighteen! A girl of his native mountains, Estelle by name, — “*Stella montis*.” After love, it was genius that beat at the door of his soul; the genius of others, while he waited for the coming of his own. Shakespeare and Goethe, Byron and Virgil, Gluck, Beethoven, even Spontini, stirred his being to its very depths.



BERLIOZ.



Loving and believing in Shakespeare as men believe in God, he one day imagined that he was espousing Desdemona or Ophelia, under the guise of an English actress, Henrietta Smithson; but their union was filled with a horror truly Shakespearian, and they broke it after a few awful years. Later, on hearing of the "fair Ophelia's" death, Berlioz wrote: "Destruction! Fire and thunders! Blood and tears! My brain shrivels in my skull when I think of those horrors!" Five or six years after her death he married again.

"Music and love," he once wrote, "are the two wings of the soul." But his own great eagle's wings were broken, for his people of France would have none of his genius; and while Prussia, Austria, and Russia were loud in their applause, Frenchmen, during his lifetime, would but rarely listen to his works. And then at what a cost, under what conditions, and with what success! till, at last, he took despairing refuge in a silence that was almost oblivion.

He grew to be an inconsolable old man, twice a widower and "wicked as a thousand devils," he himself said, "spewing life out of my mouth" — the life at which Chateaubriand merely yawned.

At sixty-one he met once more the love of his boyhood, the "Stella montis," whom he had seen only once during half a century. He loved her yet, — as a child, always as a child, he told her. His "star," now a good lady who, herself, had been twice a widow, smiled upon him with indulgence, and a little emotion, too; but still only with a smile, and he had dreamed of something more.

This was the last star in his heaven, for the doubtful success of the "Trojans" threw but a passing light across his night. His only son died far from home. At last death came to him, as he waited, solitary and savage towards men and things. "I think," Berlioz once said, "that men must leave vengeance to time," and how has time avenged him!

Berlioz is romantic by virtue of more than one feature of his genius. In the first place, he has an independent personality and a keen sense of his own passion. One of his first works, the "Symphonie Fantastique," is a bit of musical autobiography. Another sign of the romance of his genius is its worship of strange gods. It was to the genius of a Shakespeare, a Byron, and a Goethe that his own genius made its first votive offerings, when he wrote "Roméo et Juliette," "Harold in Italie," and the "Dam-

nation de Faust." And lastly, and most characteristic feature of romanticism, he seeks less the realisation of beauty than the manifestation of character; he strives for expression always and at all cost. It may be questioned whether Berlioz depreciated music in thus making it a means rather than an end in itself. But does there exist — natural or human — any being except God Himself, which may be an end sufficient unto itself? What are the arts, if not means, modes, and interpreters? And which of them may boast of an abstract, completely self-sufficient beauty? Which one possesses any intrinsic charm for men beyond and outside of its power of expression and representation?

But without attempting to discuss such grave questions, we may simply define Berlioz as the great "expresser," and "Faust," his masterpiece, as the wonderful expression of one of the moral phases of humanity — and this phase the love of the romantic. Berlioz's favourite hero is the hero of a Byron or a Chateaubriand; an ardent, unhappy creature, the plaything of vague passions and transient dreams, a prey to grand griefs and magnificent *ennui*, and such is Faust — the man of Berlioz's imagination. See him at the first, face to face with the nature which no longer has the power to give him pleasure, —

himself gloomy enough to darken the face of all natural things. — Laughing meadows of Haydn, what change has come over you? Then comes the march of the battalions, the march sublime and unequalled, the march of the heroes of all the centuries moving on to their victories. And then the Easter hymn; the enchanting music of Easter Sunday, which not even the Good Friday chants of “Parsifal” can excel. But neither nature, nor glory, nor faith can stir the human lassitude of Faust. The scene of the “Sommeil de Faust” is perhaps most beautiful and most romantic of all, as the man, weary of living, plunges down, is absorbed once more, and annihilated within the bosom of Universal Being.

Berlioz, it is scarcely necessary to say, was a symphonist of great genius. In his style, which is neither that of a Beethoven, nor still less of a Sebastian Bach, but above all, in his orchestration is Berlioz the great sound colourist; and this less by the linear perfection of his work than by its timbre, for timbre is colour in music. He is the greatest musician of French romanticism by virtue of his colour, as Eugène Delacroix in his colouring is its greatest painter.

But let us not forget that in a portion, at least, of one of his works — the fourth act of the



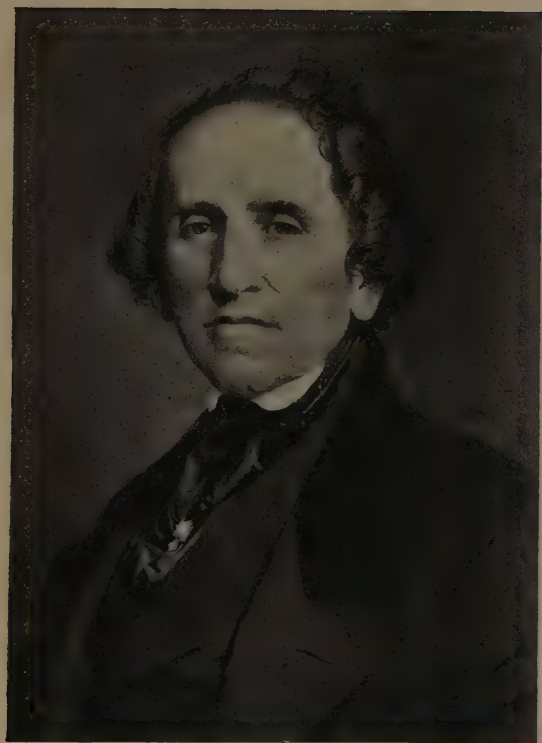
original "Trojans," the second act of the mutilated version — Berlioz is classic. Nothing could be more Virgilian than the hymn of Iopas to Ceres. The septet by the sea is the kiss of divine waves upon a divine shore, and the duet which follows is the royal *nocturne* of a royal love. All here is so calm, so antique, so pure, that one hesitates to choose between "Faust" and the "Trojans," or to come to any critical conclusion upon the two great efforts of his genius. What way better, then, than to rest undecided, leaving ourselves two great delights? Let us love the horror of the abyss and the sweet calm of the refuge. Happy the traveller who, crossing the slopes of some treacherous volcano, sees nestling in a fold of the terrible mountain the divine quiet of some sacred wood.

## XI.

### MEYERBEER.

THE Emperor Otho, so says Henri Heine, once entered the tomb of Charlemagne. "The body was not lying as the dead are left in their coffins, but seated as though in life upon a throne. On his head was a golden crown, and in his hands his sceptre. . . ." As we, too, are about to enter the tomb of the illustrious dead, well may we hesitate at the threshold. Wagner is in the ascendant, and it is with a certain dread that we open the pages, perhaps somewhat neglected of late, of "Robert le Diable," "Les Huguenots," "Le Prophète," and "L'Africaine," — that first tetralogy, forsaken for another. But our fears are groundless, for in his vaulted sepulchre Meyerbeer, too, sits enthroned. The sceptre has not fallen from his hand, nor the crown from his brow, and before the grand genius, one instinctively exclaims: "I knew not that he was so grand!"

He is, indeed, one of the greatest of all the musicians of the theatre, and the chief of the



MEYERBEER.



musicians of history. For why should we question the historical property of music, — especially the music of the theatre? Why should music be the one art powerless to understand and bring back to us the past? And why should it not as well be the interpreter of a real humanity as of a world of legends and dreams? Said George Sand: "Save, perhaps, a metaphysical dissertation — and I for my part waste no regrets upon that — there is nothing which music is not capable of expressing." And the music of to-day is not afraid even of metaphysics. She has her philosophers — leave her her historian!

But, says some one, the historical character of "*Les Huguenots*," for example, lies, perhaps, solely in the text and in the embellishments of the libretto, or the poem rather, — for the Scribe of Meyerbeer was a poet. Very well! Try to set "*Les Huguenots*" upon the stage without its music, and say whether its colour is in the drama and its stage-setting, or in the music. Who is the historian, Scribe or Meyerbeer?

What more charming and faithful picture of the French Renaissance was ever painted than the first two acts of "*Les Huguenots*"? The music seems to linger over the surroundings and surface of the subject. First a feast of courtiers

with their prince ; then sweet, royal Touraine, and the white stones of Valois reflected in the calm waters ; over all grace, distinction, and high-bred beauty. After these two acts in the sunlight come three night scenes : *Pré aux Clercs* and the Louvre, the silence broken by confused noises and vague rumours. A bell sounds the curfew, and women sing a sad litany on the threshold of the chapel, as old Paris draws within herself, disquieted and menaced with death.

All this, however, is but the physiognomy of the time. If you would seek its soul, turn to the fourth and fifth acts ; there you find the soul, or rather the two souls, of that great historical event, — the massacre of Bartholomew ; the soul of atrocity and that of heroism ; the soul of the butcher and of his victim.

But Meyerbeer is a still greater dramatist than historian. He is not the musician of analysis or psychological anatomy, but of movement and theatrical action. Perhaps there is even something too external in this art which so lends itself to situation and characters, but which never rises above them ; the art of a Gluck, who represents rather than suggests. Meyerbeer's thoughts were altogether in opposition to the methods of to-day, for he went from idea to indi-

vidual, rather than from individual to idea ; far from generalising his personalities, he personified his sentiment, and in this lies the very essence of dramatic genius.

Such a genius can be constantly traced through Meyerbeer's work ; he incarnates every thought, and with him all words are flesh. That element of the fantastic, for instance, which in "Der Freischütz" is so picturesque, becomes the living, human figure of Bertram in "Robert le Diable." Neither has the demon of Meyerbeer anything in common with the Mephistopheles of Berlioz or Schumann ; for Bertram is no principle nor spirit of evil ; he is simply a father possessed of the evil one. Again, compare the dénouement of "Robert le Diable" with that of "Tannhäuser" : both deal with the peril and the salvation of a soul ; but Tannhäuser's battle and victory are fought and won within his own breast, while Robert struggles not only between two influences, but between the two personalities of Alice and Bertram.

And love ! Who has ever so dramatised love as the author of "Les Huguenots" ? If those simple words, "*Tu m'aimes !*" in the immortal duet between Raoul and Valentine vibrate with a power which they never before possessed, do they not owe this new accent of blended fear

and delight to the urgency of peril and the approach of death?

And finally, as to religion, "this son of Germany has taught us how it may be preached from the stage of a theatre." The words are Richard Wagner's, spoken years ago, and none could be more just. That religious idea which the Wagner of "*Parsifal*" would one day take as the theme of his sublime imaginations and tender reveries, the Meyerbeer of "*Les Huguenots*" — that great musician of the theatre — had already established as a province of drama and as a principle of action, by which men live, for which they kill, and for which they die.

Legend and symbol are beautiful, but no less fair are life and drama. They are gigantic to-day, those pre-historic men of the "*Eddas*" in their "mantles of goat-skin;" but only yesterday how charming was the young gentleman of France, in his doublet of violet velvet and his chain of gold! I am glad to study and admire *Tristan and Isolde*, as they represent the principle and essence of pure love; but I am well pleased, too, that *Valentine and Raoul* are simply two human beings who love one another, two lovers of the same flesh and blood as my own. The maternity of *Fides* does not strike me as too commonplace, even beside the paternity of



Wotan ; and the kiss which the humble woman gives her son is no less touching to me than the sublime embrace in which the just god clasps the goddess in her punishment, on the Scandinavian rock.

Let us, then, continue to admire Meyerbeer, endeavouring to retain in our music something of his genius, something of the solid and concrete, which reassures and confirms, and which saves us from the menacing abstraction not of realism but of reality.

## XII.

### WAGNER.

THOUGH greater, much greater, as a musician, Wagner was nevertheless a great poet. In the inwardness and generality of his poetic thought, from "Der Fliegender Holländer" to his latest drama, he represents only acts of the mind and conditions of the conscience. He plunges, as he himself says, with perfect confidence, into the depths of the soul's mysteries, and from without this inmost centre of life he sees the growth of an external form. "Lohengrin," as its author again tells us, rests upon an entirely moral revolution within the heart of Elsa. From the innermost recesses of that heart come all the danger and all the misfortune; and more tragic than a Paris swimming in the blood of St. Bartholomew's Eve, or a John of Leyden buried beneath the ruins of his palace, is the thought that one short moment, one word of doubt, may destroy forever the union of two souls. Deep down into the mythology and the philosophy of Wag-



WAGNER.



ner's operas, one must search for the moral and spiritual meaning which is embodied in them; always so large and so profound that it embraces and envelops all men. In the Wagnerian drama, personal, concrete beauty develops into a symbolic grace. While Valentine and Raoul are themselves, and themselves alone, we believe as we listen to the scene of "Die Walküre" that we ourselves are Wotan and Brünnhilde, participating in the soul of the universe; we are raised, through intellect and emotions, at once to the comprehension of the purest and grandest moral ideas, — the ideas of Justice and of Mercy, of Pity, Sacrifice, and Redemption.

But alas! At times we fall far short of such delights, for the symbol has fallen into the abstract, and the abstract into nothingness; for Wagner the musician, as well as for Wagner the poet, we must plead guilty to such vicissitudes and such mistakes.

The author of the "Tetralogy" is a wonderful master of symphony, — after Beethoven, perhaps the greatest. According to his own words, it was the torrent of German symphony which Beethoven had created, that he flung into the bed of musical drama. "*Symphonialis est anima*," said a saint of the Middle Ages, and Wagner has echoed the thought; the soul, to

him, is nothing but a symphony, and the symphony a soul. He expressed all through his orchestra, and it sufficed him. Many a beautiful scene from his dramas is but a *tableau vivant* with grand instrumental accompaniment. As Siegmund lies dying of thirst and fatigue at Sieglinde's door, it is the orchestra that entreats her pity. And Parsifal and Gurnemanz might sit silent in the sweet air of the April morning, for flowers blossom in the orchestra, and through it the springtime sends her perfume and her smile.

But the grand symphonist passed by the beauty of the human voice almost without recognition. Despising, sometimes insulting, human speech, he neglected to establish an equilibrium between the two elements of dramatic music, and reversed the primitive inequality of voice and orchestra.

Wagner is now the all-powerful master, and again the captive and slave of that essential element of symphony, — the *leitmotiv*. By the development, and still more by the combining of his themes, he has voiced the infinite grandeur of the soul and the infinite detail ; the profound complexity of that soul where nothing exists for itself alone ; in which every note has its harmonic, each movement its reaction, and

where the opposite and contradicting meet and are reconciled.

But if the *leitmotiv* is the life of music, it may also be its death; in time Wagner's *leitmotiv* kills liberty, fancy, and happy ease in art, and imprisons genius in a monotonous formula and repetition. Thus the colossal musician at times belittles his own music; from a language grandly independent he sinks to constraint and weakness; and turning from a system of signs full of sensitive feeling, he shackles himself with a scheme as conventional as that of figures and words.

Lastly, Wagner willed that in music all should be melody; for him the current of life could as well be interrupted as the current of music. And, in truth, though the soul is complex, its continuity of life is never broken; we are not to-day so much what we are as what we have been and what we shall be, and this Wagner realised. Marvellously has he written into his music this perpetual evolution and this constant tendency. In this sense he is the great musician of the future, seldom touching upon that which abides but ever upon transformation and preparation. Is it not, however, end and achievement which possess the truest beauty, and not movement and tendency?

Eternal satisfaction lies in "to be" and not "to become."

Such is this all-powerful, extraordinary genius; the sovereign dispenser of supernatural ecstasies and of superhuman weariness. We plunge into the infinitude of his genius and are lost; irresistible as nature or a crowd, he is as pitiless as both. He charms and depresses us; he is the god of the mountain height and the demon of the abyss. It is impossible to speak of him without enthusiasm and without revolt; from the same breast he calls forth anathemas and blessings.

THE END.













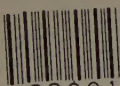




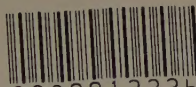




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